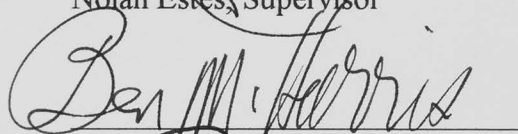


**A STUDY OF THE CAREER PATHS AND PATTERNS OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN SUPERINTENDENTS**

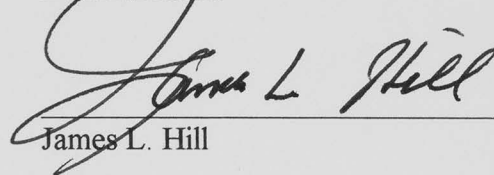
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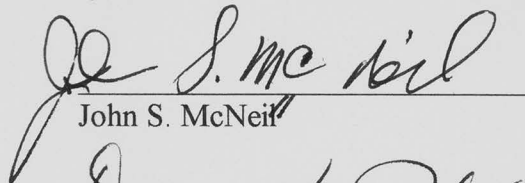
Nolan Estes, Supervisor



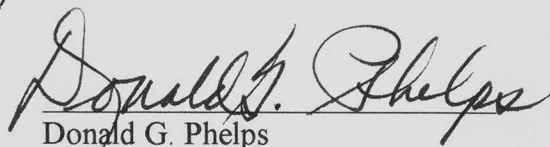
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1997



**A STUDY OF THE CAREER PATHS AND PATTERNS OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN SUPERINTENDENTS**

by

**HOWARD KEVAN DUNLOP, B.S., M.Ed.**

**DISSERTATION**

Presented to the Dissertation Committee

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AUGUST 1997

This dissertation is dedicated to the living memory of my late parents,  
Howard Arnold Dunlop and Mary Jean Dunlop and also to my loving wife,  
Patricia, and precious son, Kevan. Their patience, encouragement, and sacrifices  
during the past years have allowed me to pursue a dream.

*“To thine own self be true”*

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A STUDY OF THE CAREER PATHS AND PATTERNS OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN SUPERINTENDENTS

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

Howard Kevan Dunlop, Ph. D.  
The University of Texas at Austin, 1997

Supervisor: Nolan Estes

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate the professional experiences of African American superintendents. The research questions focused on: (1) career path and career patterns; (2) the extent of selected characteristics of their school districts prior and during their tenure as superintendents; and (3) the perceived racial barriers facing African American superintendents seeking the superintendency.

A descriptive survey questionnaire was mailed to 202 African American superintendents. Frequency distribution and means were used to provide

descriptive findings about career paths and career patterns. Correlations were used to identify the significance of relationships between prior and current selected school district characteristics. Perceived racial barriers were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis format.

The findings of the study provided noteworthy information regarding biographical data, career paths to the superintendency, and career patterns of African American superintendents. This study offers concrete substantiation of the differences and similarities between African American superintendents and the general population of superintendents in the areas of age, gender, marital status, salary, highest degree held, positions prior to the superintendency, process for selection, and other professionally related variables.

The findings further revealed that African American superintendents are associated with primarily two career path groups: traditional intermediate route and traditional long route in their path to the superintendency. Additionally, data from the study revealed numerous perceived racial barriers facing African Americans seeking superintendency positions. These barriers include: mobility, networking, boards of education, preparation and competence, opportunities, unrealistic expectations, lack of support, and discrimination. Furthermore, the

findings indicated several significant correlations between prior and current school district characteristics. These findings include an increase in the following: current operating expense per-pupil, number of African American teachers, African American population, and African American female school board members in school districts where African Americans were superintendents. The findings of the study also indicate a decrease in White student enrollment and number of White teachers in school districts where African Americans were superintendents.



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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

*“O let my land be a land where Liberty  
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath  
But opportunity is real, and life is free,  
Equality is in the air we breathe*

*(There’s never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this homeland of the free. )”*

Langston Hughes

### **Background of the Study**

Public school superintendents have one of the most challenging, demanding, and visible positions in American society. They provide educational leadership in approximately 15,499 school districts across the United States. Their visibility is marked by the fact that the majority of leadership positions are held by non-minority individuals (American Association of School Administrators, 1992). The underrepresentation of minorities in public school



leadership positions on a national level has been thoroughly documented over the years, and the limited representation of African Americans in top positions of public school administration is glaring (AASA, 1992, 1983; Jones & Montenegro, 1988, 1985; Montenegro, 1993).

The data available on the office of the superintendency in U.S. schools revealed that 3.4 percent were minority men, 0.4 percent were minority females, and 4.6 percent were white females (AASA, 1992). Additionally, data from this 1992 study disclosed that for the position of the assistant superintendent, minority men accounted for 8.6 percent of these positions; and minority women accounted for 3.3 percent. The total representation of women in assistant superintendent positions was 17.4 percent.

It is widely believed that a diverse representation is needed in a pluralistic society such as the one that we live in, but perhaps more important is the need to utilize our human resources in order to develop the talents of all those who can make valuable contributions for the greater good of all. It is critically important children see that African American superintendents exist, that people of color can assume leadership positions. They are needed by the community to serve not just

as role models, but as educational leaders who can provide the best learning environments to fulfill the hopes and expectations of our nation's youth.

In the area of school administration, the superintendency has traditionally been dominated by White males (Jones, 1985). Historically, minorities have been underrepresented in public school leadership positions, especially in the top position, the superintendency. While, women, African Americans, and other racial minorities have slowly joined their ranks, it has not been at a level representative of the population, or at a level that is proportional to their numbers in the teaching profession. In most U.S. organizations, the representation of culture groups i.e., minorities in the overall work population, and especially in the most powerful positions, is highly skewed (Cox, 1994). This trend is reflected in public school organizations as well. Not until the last three decades were African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans appointed to the office of the superintendency (Jones & Montenegro, 1983).

To underscore the problem of the underrepresentation of minorities in public school administration, a recent report revealed another fact: the minority teaching population is declining (Consortium for Minorities in Teaching Careers, 1992). This is alarming because accessing educational administrative positions begins

with the possession of teaching credentials and teaching experience. Considering the already low number of minority teachers, it is obvious that the pool of potential minority public school administrators will be even smaller in the future. Historically, the largest group of African American professionals to provide leadership within the African American community has been educators. They have valued education as a method to achieve individual enrichment as well as social progress (King, 1993).

The American Association of School Administrators (1992) reports that more than half of the public school administrators will be eligible for retirement by 1998. One would hope that such a prediction would allow minorities and women aspiring to positions of public school leadership to have windows of opportunity to move into leadership positions. However, these opportunities may not materialize given the historical nature of racial and gender promotional barriers that have plagued the fiber of this country since its inception.

By the year 2020, the United States population is projected to be 30% African American and Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). Several states will have minority populations that are, in fact, the majority. African American and Hispanic youth are already the majority population in many urban school

systems. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census (1986), by the year 2000, 42% of all public school students will come from the African American and Hispanic minority groups.

The changing demographics of the nation reflected in the student population warrant similar representation in public school administration. As the nation approaches the twenty-first century, the lack of minorities in positions of leadership in public schools—specifically as superintendents—continues to be an alarming problem in the United States (AASA, 1992).

The context of the study of this introductory chapter provides an overview for the purposed study of the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents as well as describing the extent of conditions found in the sampled school districts prior to their appointment. A rationale for supporting the study follows. Chapter I also includes the research questions, definitions and the limitations of the study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

A review of the literature suggests that a study of the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents is worthy of intellectual

pursuit (Jones, 1985; Shepherd, 1996). Information on minority educational administrators, specifically African American superintendents, is nearly absent from the literature. When examining the careers of women or minority educational administrators, few studies have included the career paths or career patterns of African American superintendents. There is also a need for comprehensive information on school districts headed by African American superintendents. The findings of such a study will provide an awareness and understanding of the problems and issues in African American administered school districts.

The purpose of this research study is to: (1) examine and describe the career path and career pattern experiences of African Americans who have attained superintendency positions in public schools; (2) the study will examine the nature of selected characteristics found in the school districts prior and during their tenure as superintendent; and (3) examine the perceived racial barriers facing those seeking the position of superintendent. This study will focus on African American superintendents in the United States. During the 1995-96 school year, there was a total of 223 identified African Americans superintendents leading public school districts in the United States, as shown by a survey conducted by Charles Moody Sr. (1996).

Although other researchers (Burnham, 1989; Holliman, 1996) focused on the topic of career paths and career patterns, their investigations did not provide specific details about African American superintendents in their studies. Furthermore, research detailing the extent of characteristics existing in school districts prior to the appointment of African American superintendents has received little emphasis in the current research literature.

It is the opinion of this researcher that examining the career paths, career patterns, and school district characteristics of current African American superintendents could prove beneficial to aspiring or current superintendents.

### **Rationale for the Study**

It was not until the 1970s that African Americans were appointed to urban school districts in any number. The first African American superintendents in urban centers were viewed by many constituents as representing their entire race and high expectations were placed on them (Jackson, 1995). These African American superintendents were usually appointed to urban school districts in which problems had become so severe that solutions seemed almost impossible.

Moody (1971) identified twenty-one school systems headed by African American superintendents during the 1970-71 school year in connection with a dissertation study he conducted at Northwestern University. That study led him to organize the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents, which was later changed to the National Alliance of Black School Educators and included other school administrators and teachers. In 1974, forty-four African American superintendents were identified for a research study conducted by Scott (1980). The purpose of the research study was to seek basic information about their school systems. The study also sought background information on each of the African American superintendents. The most recent count of African American superintendents points to approximately 223 nationwide, out of a total of approximately 15,499 school systems (Moody, 1996).

There is an interesting trend that has developed in the increase of African American superintendents. The trend is reflective in the twenty-one identified African American superintendents in 1971 (Moody, 1971) as compared to the two hundred twenty-three identified in 1996. This trend represents an average annual increase of more than 30% within that time frame. However, this increase is modest when one considers African Americans still constitute less than two

percent of the 15,499 superintendents in school districts throughout the United States. The total population of African Americans in the U.S. is approximately 29.2 million or 11.7 percent of the population. The disparity in these figures give rise to a concern as to what factors could account for the under-representation of African American superintendents. The research literature suggests that there are several reasons for this noteworthy increase. The research of Jones (1985) and Scott (1980) reports that the increase in African American superintendents is due, in part, to the appointment of many African American superintendents to urban systems with high percentages of minority students. Additionally, Scott predicted that there would be an increase in the number of African American superintendents in school districts with high minority populations because of critical financial conditions and educational problems accrued from years of neglect and deprivation. Accordingly, these unwanted superintendencies would be available for African Americans and recruitment would be unnecessary for those school districts by non-minority superintendents (Scott, 1980). The events predicted by Scott in the early 1980s have come to fruition during the mid 1980s and 1990s. This is especially true in the urban cities of Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Oakland, New Orleans, etc. (Jones, 1993).



Clearly the need exists for a current and more comprehensive survey of African American superintendents. The findings of such studies will provide an awareness and understanding of the nature of the African American superintendent and will be useful in the following areas:

1. Information on the career path and career patterns of African American superintendents. There is a need for information about the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents, which would shed insight to the upward mobility of this important leadership position. This will create an awareness among African American educational administrators of variables that may affect their chances for obtaining a superintendency.

2. Information on the characteristics of districts headed by African American. There is a need for information on the prior and current status of districts headed by African American superintendents. This will create an awareness among African American superintendents of the challenges and opportunities within school districts, and be guided accordingly in their career decisions.

3. What racial barriers have African American superintendents encountered? This will provide a framework for understanding discriminatory factors that may

impact obtaining and maintaining a job of superintendent in segregated and diverse environments.

### **Research Questions**

The three major research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What were the career path and career pattern experiences of African American superintendents that led to their ascension to the position of superintendent?
2. What was the extent of selected characteristics of the school district prior to and during their tenure as superintendent?
3. What are the perceived racial barriers faced by those seeking the position of superintendent?

### **Methodology**

The design of this study utilized a descriptive survey approach in order to examine the career paths and career patterns of current African American superintendents. An additional focus examined the extent of selected characteristics of school districts prior to their appointments as superintendent. Those selected characteristics included the financial support, community, board of

education and teachers of their districts. The purpose of any descriptive research is to accurately, factually, and systematically describe the existing facts and characteristics and phenomena of a given population (Isaac & Michael, 1991; Fink, 1995). Descriptive research “is the accumulation of a data base that is solely descriptive... it does not necessarily seek or explain relationships, test hypotheses, make predications, or get at meanings and implications...” (Isaac & Michael, 1981, p. 46). However, relationships between career paths, career patterns, and the extent of selected characteristics of school districts will be explored. The methodology involved the selection of a national population, development of a survey instrument, pilot-testing the survey instrument, administering the survey to the national sample, organizing the data, analyzing the data, and reporting the results of the data.

#### Selection of Subjects

The population identified for this study included all male and female African American superintendents serving in the public schools during the 1996-97 school. The database for the selection of subjects was obtained from the founder of the National Black Alliance of School Educators. This list is composed of all African American male and female superintendents serving in U.S. schools.

The list has been updated from other national and state educational organizations to provide current data and eliminate the possibility of duplication.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation utilized in this study consisted of a descriptive survey questionnaire. A single descriptive survey questionnaire was developed, pilot-tested, revised, and mailed to the superintendents in the sample. The descriptive survey questionnaire contained questions concerning the following types of items: demographic information about the superintendents' sex, age, and educational level; characteristics of the school districts they administered, and characteristics of the school board.

The instrumentation utilized in this study consisted of two types of questioning: closed-ended and open-ended. The researcher felt that this type of questioning was appropriate because of the wide range of responses anticipated. The content of these questions focused on factual responses from the participant. The goal of these questions was to have each participant respond accurately.

### Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to test the appropriateness of the descriptive survey questionnaire. The pilot study was conducted by administering the descriptive survey questionnaire to a panel consisting of five to seven educational researchers and former superintendents. The pilot study enhanced the credibility of the research and provided data for testing, analytical procedures and suggested possible revisions needed (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Additionally, the feedback obtained as a result of the pilot study gave the researcher information about the appropriateness and clarity of the questions.

### **Data Collection**

Packets of information pertaining to the study were mailed to each participant. Each packet included a cover letter, a copy of the survey instrument, and a postage paid, self-addressed return envelope. Each survey was coded with an ID number to ensure the confidentiality of participants and provide a system for data collection. The packets were mailed during the second week of February 1997. A reminder card was mailed 14 days after the initial mailing to all non-respondents emphasizing the importance of the study. To increase the response

rate, telephone calls were placed to non-respondents. A personalized thank you note was sent to each respondent upon receipt of the completed survey emphasizing the importance of the study and expressing the researchers' gratitude for their response to the survey.

The researcher hoped for a high response rate. However, some non-response is inevitable. Rubin's & Babbie's (1993) review of the literature revealed that there is a wide range of response rates for adequate analysis and reporting. The response rate is the number who respond divided by the number of eligible respondents. No single response rate is considered the standard (Fink, 1995).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of making coherent meaning out of the raw data collected. Efficient management of the raw data is required, or the researcher will be overwhelmed with data. It is task of the researcher to organize the data into a workable format. This survey is designed to be descriptive; however, there are some qualitative elements that will be included.

Each returned questionnaire was reviewed for completeness. The results of participants' response to the questionnaire was the only major source of data

analyses. Responses to the questionnaire items were sorted for specific items of data analysis.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. SPSS is a data management and analysis software product. Among its features are modules for statistical data analysis including descriptive statistics such as plots, frequencies, charts, and lists as well as sophisticated inferential and multivariate statistical procedures such as analysis of variance, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and categorical data analysis. This software package was well suited for descriptive survey research.

### Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which a survey instrument assesses what it purports to measure (Fink, 1995). Each participant in the present study received the same set of questions. An effort was made to ensure that the questions were analyzed and interpreted in the same manner for all participants. The researcher used closed-ended questions to solicit answers that would be appropriate for the focus of the study. Additionally, the researcher used an open-ended question to solicit the kind of response that was desired for that particular theme. Because the descriptive survey was conducted by mail, interviewer bias was not a concern.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this research study. First, the study is limited by the design, researcher bias, and the selection of the participants. The goal of this descriptive survey is to provide rich description about the career path and career pattern experiences for current African American superintendents. An additional focus will examine the extent of conditions of school districts prior to their appointments as superintendent. However, the survey research design may produce a low rate of return. The survey response is dependent on the willingness of the respondents to share and return personal information. The collection of data was also dependent upon the willingness of the participants to share personal information about their career paths, career pattern experiences and the extent of selected conditions of their school districts with the researcher.

Second, in documenting the rich description, researcher bias may occur in the processing of information, data gathering, and drawing conclusions. As an African American, the researcher acknowledges his association with a study referencing African American superintendents. However, this bias is viewed as an asset and not as a hindrance.



Third, the selection of African American superintendents may fluctuate with the employment of the participants during the 1996-97 school year. There are limitations on the thoroughness of the national survey list.

### **Definitions**

To enhance the clarity and consistency, the terms below are defined for the purpose of this study.

African Americans- all people born, raised, and living in the United States who are descendants of African slaves. However some people of African ancestry may prefer to be referred to as Afro-American, Black, and Negro.

American Association of School Administrators (AASA)- a professional association of school administrators and other professional educators.

Membership includes superintendents, associate and assistant superintendents, and central office administrators. Membership also includes area administrators, professional educational administrators, and educators who aspire to become school administrators.

Career path- the sequence of identifiable positions held over years of an individual's career.

Career patterns- an identifiable pattern of position sequence, tenure, and other features characterizing and differentiating careers of groups of individuals.

Superintendent- chief executive officer of a local public school system. He/she is expected to assist in the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of the board of education goals, objectives, and policies.

Discrimination- the practice of using sex, race, age, language, and other characteristics to make prejudicial decisions.

Glass ceiling- a promotion barrier that prevents, restricts, delays an individual's mobility within an organization or field of endeavor.

Mentorship/Sponsorship- engagement in a professional relationship with an experienced individual or individuals to provide career-role model assistance and offer advice and guidance; make recommendations; and assist entry into the administrative (Little, 1980).

Minority- a part of a population differing from others in some characteristic and often subjected to differential treatment (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1993).

Mobility- upward movement from position to another position.

National Alliance of Black School Educators- (NABSE) a professional association of Black school educators. Membership includes a wide range of educational positions. The NABSE is organized to promote and facilitate the education of all students, Black students in particular. Also, this organization provides a coalition of Black educators and others directly and indirectly involved in the educational process (NABSE, 1987).

School district- a unit of administration of a public school system within a given geographical location. It is empowered by state law to administer a public school (system).

Upward Mobility- upward movement from one position to another position.

Vertical Mobility- movement up or down the administrative ladder from one administrative position to another administrative position.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although other researchers (Burnham, 1989; Holliman, 1996) focused on the topic of career paths and career patterns, their investigations did not provide detail about the African American superintendent in their studies. Furthermore, research detailing the extent of selected characteristics existing in school districts

prior to the appointment of African American superintendents has received little emphasis in the current research literature. It is the opinion of this researcher that examining the career paths and career patterns of current African American superintendents could prove beneficial to aspiring administrators en route to the superintendency. Additionally, the finding will provide an awareness and understanding of the problems and issues in African American administered school districts.

This study will magnify the understanding of the career paths, experiences, and perspectives of African American superintendents. In the initial review of literature, there was a dearth of information about African American superintendents' experiences and perspectives. Finally, it is hoped this study will provide a rich body of information about African American superintendents for future research studies and for prospective school administrators who aspire to the position of the superintendency.

### **Summary**

This study has developed out of the researcher's personal and professional interest about the position of superintendent and the factors and conditions that

influence their careers. Because of the need to attract, train, and employ qualified candidates for the superintendent's role, it is critical to gather information and knowledge about those factors that will impact the superintendent's career. Studies in this area have primarily focused on the dominant group. However, identifying other groups' factors and conditions may potentially prove beneficial for others aspiring to the position of superintendent.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation will be organized into five chapters. A review of literature about African American superintendents and background information about career paths and career patterns of superintendents is provided in Chapter II. Chapter III provides a description of the research design and methods that will be used to examine the proposed research questions. The results and analyses of the data will be presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V includes a summary of the study as well as findings, conclusions, and implications.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of The Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Public school superintendents have one of the most challenging, demanding, and visible positions in American society. They provide educational leadership in approximately 15,499 school districts across the United States. This visibility is marked by the fact that the majority of leadership positions are held by non-minority individuals (AASA, 1992). The underrepresentation of minorities in public school leadership positions on a national level has been thoroughly documented over the years, and the limited representation of African Americans in top positions of public school administration is glaring (AASA, 1992, 1983; Jones & Montenegro, 1988, 1985; Montenegro, 1993).

The purpose of this section is twofold: first, in a survey of the literature, the author provides an overview of African American superintendents; second, a review of several studies provides background information relative to the career pattern and career path experiences of African American superintendents. Furthermore, conclusions and a need for further study will also be presented in the final analysis.

This section begins with a discussion of the limited number of research studies regarding the underrepresentation of minorities in educational administration. The author provides a historical overview of the African American superintendent. A review of literature relative to the conditions, characteristics, problems, expectations and roles of the African American superintendent is provided. Next a review of the recruitment, selection and placement of African American superintendents is provided. Finally, a body of research on the career patterns and career paths of superintendents is also presented.

A segment of the educational administration community has been somewhat neglected in the educational administration literature. Information on minority educational administrators, specifically African American superintendents, is nearly absent from the literature. When examining the careers of women or minority educational administrators, few studies include African Americans superintendents' career patterns or career paths. Yet, it should not be assumed that the experiences of African American superintendents who are different in their ethnicity from the majority of those who lead public school districts, are either irrelevant or uninformative.

Research on minorities and women in educational administration has focused primarily on White female school or district leaders. The under-representation of minorities and women in educational administration employment has been thoroughly documented in recent years (AASA, 1992, 1983; Glass, 1992; Jones & Montenegro, 1988, 1985; Jones, 1983). The few studies that exist generally describe the characteristics of minority and women educational administrators; the obstacles they overcame; and their performance as active school or district leaders. Although this research area is rich with data concerning White females, there is a dearth of information on minority administrators, both female and male, (Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkison, 1986). Yeakey et al. further note that there is little published research that speaks to the cause of this disparity in the literature.

Within the limited number of studies on minority educational administrators are reports on the status of female and male minority administrators as well as suggestions for increasing these individuals' participation in educational administration (Leonard & Papa-Lewis, 1987; Moody, 1973; Ortiz, 1982). Furthermore, studies investigating the experiences of minority school



leaders have focused on the influence that race or ethnicity has had on acquiring administrative positions (Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkison, 1986; Ortiz, 1982).

This review is primarily limited to African Americans in the school superintendency. Although one might assume that since all marginalized groups suffer underrepresentation in educational administration positions, they can be analyzed together. Yet the reasons for the underrepresentation are as deceptively complex as they are pervasively subtle. For this reason, the investigation of African American superintendents warrants separate special consideration.

### **Historical Perspective on the African Americans in the Superintendency**

There is a scarcity of information about African Americans in school administration before the second half of this century. However, the limited research on African American superintendents revealed two early periods in which they were either state superintendents or the equivalent of school superintendents (Jones, 1983; Moody, 1995). During the Reconstruction Period there were five states where African Americans served as state superintendents: Arkansas, J. C. Corbin; Florida, Johnathan C. Gibbs; Louisiana, Mississippi; and South Carolina, James Brown (Moody, 1995). However, the first African American school

administrators mentioned in history who were the equivalent of present day school administrators were in schools sponsored by the Quakers. They managed the Quaker sponsored Institute for Colored in Philadelphia from 1802 to 1903 (Jones, 1983). African American administrators and faculty were influential in determining the educational objectives and practices of the Quaker sponsored African American institutions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the turn of the twentieth century, another wave of African American school administrators emerged. This new wave of school administrators directed, maintained, and assisted rural, community, and county schools for, “southern Negroes” with a one million dollar endowment directed by Quaker, Anna T. Jeanes (Jones, 1983).

The first modern day African American superintendents (one woman and one man) were believed to have been appointed in 1956 (Jones, 1983). The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE, 1987) identified four African Americans as forerunners of current African American superintendents: Lillard Ashley of Boley, Oklahoma (1956); Lorenzo R. Smith of Hopkins Park, Illinois (1956); E. W. Warrior of Taft, Oklahoma (1958); and Arthur Shropshire of

Kinloch, Missouri (1963). However, several African American superintendents, namely R. H. Hudson, D. Council Noble, and Waymon T. Carter, were employed to head the all Black system of Taft, Oklahoma, between 1930-1958 (Jones, 1983; Scott, 1983).

It was not until the 1970's that African Americans were appointed to urban school districts in any number. The first African American superintendents in urban centers were viewed by many constituents as representing their entire race and high expectations were placed on them (Jackson, 1995). These African American superintendents were usually appointed to urban school districts in which problems had become so severe that solutions were almost impossible.

Moody (1971) identified twenty-one school systems headed by African American superintendents during the 1970-71 school year in connection with a dissertation study he conducted at Northwestern University. That study led him to found the National Alliance of Black School Superintendents, later changed to the National Alliance of Black School Educators to include other school administrators and teachers. In 1974, forty-four African American superintendents were identified for a research study conducted by Scott (1980). The purpose of the research study was to seek basic information about their

school systems. The study also sought background information on each of the African American superintendents. The most recent count of African American superintendents points to approximately 223 nationwide, out of a total of approximately 15,000 school systems (Moody, 1996). This recent count is reflective of a national survey collected by Charles and Christella Moody for the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

There is an interesting trend that has developed in the increase of African American superintendents. The trend is reflective of the twenty-one identified African American superintendents in 1971 (Moody, 1971) as compared to the two hundred twenty-three identified in 1996. This trend represents an increase of more than one thousand percent within that time frame. The research literature suggests that there are several reasons for this noteworthy increase. The research of Jones (1985) and Scott (1980) reports that the increase in African American superintendents is due, in part, to the appointment of many African American superintendents to urban systems with high percentages of minority students. Additionally, Scott predicted that there would be an increase in the number of African American superintendents in school districts with high minority population because of critical financial conditions and educational problems

accrued from years of neglect and deprivation. Accordingly, these unwanted superintendencies would be available for African Americans and recruitment would be unnecessary for those school districts (Scott, 1980). The research findings predicted by Scott in the early 1980s have come to fruition during the mid 1980s and 1990s. This is especially true in the urban cities of Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Oakland, New Orleans, etc. (Jones, 1993). The emergence of African American superintendents has provided a limited number of research studies. These research studies were conducted mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. In the review that follows, an effort has been made to identify some of those studies.

### **Studies of Conditions, Characteristics, Problems**

The review of the literature on African American superintendents reveals eight thematic research areas: (1) identification of African American superintendents (Jones, 1985; Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Revere, 1985; Moody, 1971,1983); (2) conditions and characteristics of school districts headed by African American superintendents (Arnez, 1985; Doughty, 1980; Jones, Moody, 1971; Scott, 1980; Sizemore, 1981); (3) problems and characteristics of African American superintendents (Arnez, 1981; Chambers, 1979; Coates, 1980; Jones

1983, 1985; Jones and Montenegro, 1982; Lavender, 1983 Revere, 1985; 1985; Scott, 1980; Sizemore, 1981 Bulls, 1986); (4) relations between African American superintendents and school boards (Arnez, 1981; Jones, 1985); (5) perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of African American superintendents on various critical issues (Arnez, 1981; Coates, 1980; Scott, 1983; Williams, 1984; Scott, 1990); (6) processes used to recruit, select, and place African American superintendents (Arnez, 1981; Edwards, 1974; Moffet, 1981; Moody, 1983); (7) roles and expectations of African American superintendents regarding administrative, supervisory, instructional, curricular, and political processes and policies (Arnez, 1981; Napier, 1984; Scott, 1990); and (8) job satisfaction of African American superintendents (Cole, 1974; McClain, 1974).

All of the above areas of research on African American superintendents are related to the professional status of the African American superintendent. However, a selected summary of the areas of research most relevant to the study of the career patterns, career paths and the conditions of school districts headed by African American will be developed.

### Demographic Studies of African American Superintendents

Jones' (1985) dissertation study surveyed 72 African American superintendents. The purpose of the study was to: (a) produce a profile of African Americans superintendents; (b) identify the problems of African American superintendents and the communities in which the school district were located; (c) reveal the district's characteristics, and (d) describe the district's perceived training needs. Her study included 59 males and 13 females. They had similar educational levels, and 50% or more of the superintendents had doctoral degrees. The average age of the superintendents was 46. Jones also found that African American male superintendents tended to be younger than African American female superintendents. African American superintendents were at least two years younger than the typical superintendents in a study sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) in 1982. Additionally, Jones recommended that a study be conducted to determine the factors underlying the recent trends in hiring African American superintendents by predominantly white communities to shed light on hiring practices and access of African Americans into the larger society.

A recent study conducted by Moody (1996) surveyed African American superintendents in order to develop a profile of current African American superintendents. This study was a continuation of his dissertation research initially conducted in 1971. Of the 95 respondents, 73% were male and 27% were female. The average age range of the superintendents was between 50-60. Both males and females had similar educational levels. Moody reports that 74% of the superintendents had obtained a doctorate degree. This figure represents an increase from the study conducted by Jones (1985) which reported that 50% or more had obtained doctoral degrees. A majority (72%) of the superintendents were in their first superintendency. This is consistent with Moody's 1971 study which found that 100% of the superintendents were in their first superintendency. Moody's findings also reveal that 74% of the student population was African American where the respondents assumed superintendencies. This represents a decrease from his earlier study which reported the enrollment of 94% African Americans. Additionally, Moody found that the majority of the district's staff was composed of 45% African Americans. This figure represents a slight decrease from the 1971 findings which reported that the composition of the staff was 47% of African American.



In summary, the data from the profile of African American superintendents reveals a number of interesting characteristics: (a) a noteworthy increase of African American superintendents; (b) African American superintendents are predominately male; (c) the age of the African American superintendents has increased; (d) a majority of the respondents held doctoral degrees; (e) a majority of the African American superintendents were in their first superintendency; (f) a majority of the school district's student population was African American; and (g) there was a high concentration of African American school district staff.

#### Conditions of African American Superintendents

The emergence of the African American superintendent has gone relatively unnoticed (Scott, 1980). Yet their emergence has made a drastic impact on the personnel structure of more than two hundred school districts across the nation. Along with the inheritance of school districts that serve capable but disadvantage students, African American superintendents face conditions, characteristics, and challenges which are unique to their superintendency experiences. Indicators of conditions, characteristic, and challenges can be gleaned from several research studies that were designed for this propose.

Moody (1971) reported, “there is a decline in the financial conditions of the school districts manifesting themselves in deficit prior to the appointment of an African American superintendents” (p. 12). While this condition may also occur prior to the appointment of other superintendent groups, it's seems endemic to African American superintendents.

The decline in the financial condition of the school district contributes to the success or failure of the selected African American superintendent as is noted by former Washington, D. C., superintendent, Barbara Sizemore (Sizemore, 1986). However, such a strong claim can be made on behalf of all school superintendents without a strong local economy which provides an adequate tax base. School districts in most states would have a difficult time securing adequate resources to provide basic instructional services. Nevertheless, the decline of the financial condition is a condition that confronts the African American superintendents disproportionately.

According to Scott (1980), the future financial conditions of districts headed by African Americans do not look too promising. He asserted the future financial conditions relevant to African American superintendents will include the following problems:

In urban school districts with a high concentration of disadvantaged students, school officials and other school personnel will not have the resources to improve the quality of life and the level of academic achievement without more assistance from other essential service institutions. Significant increases in the number of black superintendents will reflect continued societal deterioration and increased racial isolation rather than decisions by school boards to comply with the principle of equal employment opportunity (Scott, 1980 p. 184).

Doughty (1980) contends that African American administrators still face other conditions and challenges. One such condition is the conscious or unconscious resistance from within the educational system in obtaining employment. She maintains that Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs designed to aid minority access to employment do not provide an edge for minority superintendency candidates. Although EEO programs may provide minorities a better chance for an interview, their applications were often screened out and used only as evidence of an attempt to meet federal requirement.

Another condition and challenge faced by African American superintendents is the assertion that “people respond to an African American superintendent differently because of their color” (Scott, 1980 p. 53). Scott (1980) suggested that African American superintendents are expected to immediately solve problems that stem from decades of economic, social, and racial injustice. Additionally, Scott maintains that there is a persisting of “test of fire” or quality of interaction with like peers, staff, and students. He also asserts, “Many cannot seem to be satisfied unless there is a constant confrontation with the superintendents, where he or she has to pass or fail. African American superintendents need to first pass the test before they can be regarded as professional” (p. 55).

Another condition according to Jackson (1995) facing African American superintendents is the school district's counterproductive bureaucracy. Jackson concluded that African American superintendents faced school bureaucracies that were often unwilling or unable to make the necessary school reforms needed for school improvement. She cites examples of different superintendents' efforts to make the school districts more responsive to the new majority African American

student population which often were thwarted by unyielding boards of education and school bureaucracies.

### Problems of African American Superintendents

In her study of the problems of African American superintendents, Clark (1980) identified a diverse and complex range of problems that were perceived by the participants. The majority of the superintendents participating in the study reported they had encountered at least some of the problems listed below at some time or another while in the position of superintendent: (a) racial and or sexual discrimination; (b) lack of role models of the same race and or sex; (c) community relations problems; (d) deficit finances; (e) memberships in certain organization closed to them; (f) credibility as a superintendent questioned; (g) unrealistic expectations of oneself in terms of amount and quality of work produced; (h) myths and stereotypes; (i) lack of acceptance by colleagues as a competent administrator; and (j) problems working with colleagues of the opposite sex or different race. Additionally, Clark noted a significant difference between African American superintendents and White superintendents on the response of questions relating to race and role model. The African American superintendents perceived racial discrimination and lack of role models a definite problem.

Lavender (1983) developed a study of African American superintendents formulated to ascertain commonality of agreement among respondents to the ranking of questions in a 1982 Gallup Poll. Lavender reported that lack of proper financial support posing a major problem for African American superintendents was the foremost problem confronting school as perceived by African Americans superintendents. This finding is consistent with the research of Arnez, (1981); Jones, (1985), Moody, (1971), and Scott, (1980). Lavender also noted different views were held by African American superintendents and the public responding to the 1982 Gallup Poll regarding major problems confronting public schools.

#### Expectations and Roles of African American Superintendents

The tenure of African American school administrators, especially African American superintendents, tends to be one of a short duration because they are mostly in urban districts with problems so severe they “can be solved only by miracles” (Scott, 1983). Scott also noted that African American superintendents must be able to solve financial problems; quell personnel problems; restore discipline; raise academic achievement; unite the community; and literally be able to “walk on water.” These superintendents are engaged in responding to immediate crises, more so than attending to long term problems and planning of

the school district (Scott, 1980). In his research, Moody (1971) stated that in terms of their responsibility, African American superintendents are not allowed to concentrate on the instructional aspects of the system. He wrote that the African American superintendents are “expected to be miracle men who can undo in a few days conditions that years of neglect, and in some cases, mismanagement have created” (Scott, 1980 p. 48). Moody’s 1971 dissertation study reveals the following about roles and expectations of African American superintendents:

1. There is a decline in the financial conditions of the school system manifesting itself in a deficit prior to the appointment of African American superintendents of school districts.
2. The nonwhite student population was in the majority at the time of the appointment of the African American superintendent.
3. The nonwhite population of the community is in the majority or projections indicate it soon will be.
4. There is a majority nonwhite school board at the time of the appointment of the African American superintendent.

### Recruitment, Selection, and Placement of African American Superintendents

The recruitment, selection, and placement of African American superintendents is an interesting process. The importance of external factors relating to the selection process is critical to enhancing African American mobility to school leadership. In studying this process Moody (1984) notes, “that traditionally attainment of a school superintendency has depended to an appreciable extent on the help and information an aspirant received from professional contacts” (p. 40). In his study of sponsored mobility of African American superintendents, Moody (1981) investigated the role of professional contacts as consultants, mentors, and advisors in the selection and placement of African American superintendents. The study revealed that some sponsors or mentors, such as consultants and other superintendents, offered several reasons for fostering certain individuals: (a) ability to fit into a school district, (b) competence, (c) background and experience, (d) membership in an organization, (e) career aspirations, and (f) educational leadership.

Moody’s (1981) study also revealed that white males were the dominant group sponsoring aspiring African American superintendents. The last position held by a majority of sponsors was that of superintendent. This fact is important



to note because it has a direct impact on the recruitment, selection, and placement of superintendents. Moody notes this important fact by suggesting that the experience of the sponsors gives them a natural tie to board of education members, other superintendents, and professors at local universities. This network not only help influence the upper-level job opportunities, but can also be crucial in improving the communication flow that is so vital to career development. Additionally, Holliman (1996) in her recent study of superintendents suggests that sponsorships provide access to information and guidance that is crucial to upward mobility. Although sponsorships offer no absolute guarantee of career success, it may increase the likelihood that professional advancement will take on new meaning.

Several trends were noted in the recruitment and selection of African American superintendents in research studies published ten years apart (Scott, 1983; Jones, 1993). Below is a review of their findings:

1. The larger the minority student population of a system, the more likelihood an African American superintendent is appointed. African Americans have headed the school systems of Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Rochester,

Baltimore, Washington, D. C., Atlanta, Richmond, Newark, and New Orleans (Scott, 1983).

2. The tenure of African American school administrators, especially superintendents, tends to be of short duration because they are mostly in urban districts with problems so severe they “*can be solved only by miracles*” [italics added].

Relatively little attention has been focused on the importance of sponsorship and mentorship in the superintendency. Kram (1985) notes that without sponsorship individuals are likely to be overlooked for upward mobility, regardless of competence and performance.

### **Career Patterns and Career Paths**

As stated earlier, a main focus of this study will examine the career patterns and career paths of superintendents in an effort to identify and understand developmental experiences which take place in the job setting. Career patterns of superintendents for the purpose of this review emphasize studies related to career paths pursued, and specific educational positions held. Career paths of superintendents for the purpose of this review include the succession of

positions held during the superintendent's administrative career. Compared to the literature concerning White male and female superintendents, it must be noted that there is very little research on the career patterns and career paths of minorities, specifically African American superintendents (Scott, 1980; Ortiz, 1982).

The next two subsections provide a review of three noteworthy studies relative to career patterns and career paths of public school administrators. The first study reviews the career patterns of women, men and minorities in public school administration. The next two studies review the career paths of superintendents. It is potentially beneficial to be aware of career patterns and career paths for those aspiring to be superintendents or current superintendents.

#### Ortiz's Study

A seminal study relating to, and contributing to further development on the career patterns of women, men and minorities in public school administration was conducted by Ortiz (1982). Her work has been frequently cited in studies (Leonard & Papa-Lewis, 1987; Shakeshaft, 1987; Holliman, 1996) focusing on women and minorities in educational administration. Her study examined and analyzed the career patterns and other characteristics of 350 individuals in public school administration who held California State administrative credentials. She

concluded that there is a differential interaction between organizational variables and personal attributes of candidates seeking administrative positions in public school administration.

Ortiz (1982) used socialization and role theories to explain organizational participation and the mobility patterns of public school administrators in California. She developed a career path theory consisting of four organizational variables: (a) hierarchy, (b) organizational space, (c) deposit of opportunity, and (d) power. The hierarchical concepts consist of difference due to rank and level. The organizational space concept denotes the differences in working environments, interpersonal relationships, and professional activities, each with specific role characteristics. Ortiz's third organizational factor was deposits of opportunity and power, which consists of opportunity positions and power positions. Opportunity positions are factors referring to frequent career review for advancement. These factors provide maximum exposure of the position holder, engagement of position holder in projects that require knowledge and connections of more than one administrative function, and association of position holder with more senior level individuals. Power positions are those that provide

the position holder with informal political influence, access to resources, outside status, sponsorship, and mobility prospects.

In Ortiz's study of the career patterns of women, men, and minorities in public school administration, the vice principal was the lowest of administrative positions. She describes the organizational placement as hierarchical between the teacher and principal. This baseline position provides the opportunity for gaining administrative experience. The principal is next in the administrative hierarchy, however, the elementary principal is considered to be below the secondary principal in administrative status. The top rank of the hierarchy are the administrative positions at the district's central office.

Ortiz (1982) divides the district's central office positions into four tiers. The first tier is the highest level of the hierarchy, and it consists of the superintendent, deputy or assistant superintendent, and other high level line positions. Individuals who hold these line positions have the most influence and decision-making power within the organization. A second tier of central office administrative hierarchy is composed of staff positions that provide support to the first tier hierarchy. Their primary function is to interact with principals and teachers. The third tier that Ortiz identified was composed of area administrators.

She notes that this group is typically composed of minorities whose main focus is to interact with minority community constituents. According to Ortiz, this group has the least possibility of gaining administrative skills and experience needed for the first and second hierarchy positions. This tier provides minimal visibility to individuals who could facilitate their career growth. The final tier consists of individuals who have had a negative marked performance of their past duties, but for various reasons cannot be terminated. These individuals have reached the end of their administrative careers.

Ortiz (1982) found two groups of minorities within the school systems. The first group consisted of members whose careers began before the mid-sixties and early seventies and those who entered during and after that time frame. Those who entered before the mid-sixties began with teaching and possessed regular educational certification credentials. The other group who entered the school districts during the mid-sixties and seventies may have begun in another capacity besides teaching. In addition, Ortiz reported that minorities were employed in professional positions in the most undesirable schools and were relegated to teaching in specific curricular areas such as Spanish, Black Studies, and physical education. She notes that there are several problems with this practice. First,

school personnel perceive minority teachers and administrators as ethnic representatives rather than just regular school personnel. This perception maybe due in part to the assigned duties. Second, this practice also tends to limit minority teachers and administrators from interacting with others.

In summary, this study described the various roles that white males, women and racial minorities acquire as a result of differing socialization processes. Essentially, the structure of public school administration consisted of white males occupying line positions, women occupying staff positions, and minorities occupying special project positions. She found that white males manage and administer adults, women instruct children, and minorities direct and contain other minorities. Finally, the lasting impression is that the structure mentioned in Ortiz's study contributes to the perpetuation of the present school system.

### **The Career Paths of Superintendents**

Under the direction of researcher Thomas Glass (1992), the AASA conducted a national survey of superintendents. The results of that survey were described in a publication entitled, The 1992 Study of the American School Superintendency: America's Education Leaders in a Time of Reform. The report

represents the latest in a series of studies conducted by AASA since 1923. The only lapse came in the 1940's during World War II. These studies provide a benchmark to track the progress of the superintendency and explore other issues that effect education. The content and direction of the studies have varied. However, all of the studies have defined the superintendency, who superintendents are, and described what they do.

The research for the 1992 study was conducted through a descriptive survey mailed to 2,536 practicing superintendents across the nation. The number of usable surveys returned was 1,724, accounting for 68% representation of the 2,536 number of the total superintendents nationwide. Only 67 (3.9%) surveys were identified as minority respondents, compared to 1,656 (96.1%) White respondents. In the review that follows, an effort has been made to identify information that was pertinent in describing career patterns and career paths of minority superintendents. Those career patterns and career paths of minority superintendents were described:

1. Minority superintendents began their administrative career at the building level more frequently than nonminority superintendents.



2. Minority superintendents also were more likely to have begun their careers at the elementary level than nonminority superintendents.

3. Minority superintendents were somewhat closer to their White counterparts in classroom teaching experience (0-10 years).

4. Minority superintendents, on average, received their first administrative position at about the same age as nonminority superintendents (25-30 years of age). Nearly 60% of males were appointed to their first position before age 30.

#### Career Patterns Prior to the Superintendency

The career patterns prior to the superintendency were described in the following manner:

1. A majority of minority superintendents started their administrative careers as a coordinator or assistant principal.

2. Minority superintendents are almost twice as likely than non-minorities to follow a career pattern of teacher, principal, central office administrator, and superintendent.

3. Minority superintendents ascended to their positions from inside the district as often as nonminority superintendents.

4. The majority in each group (male and nonminority) in the study came into the superintendency from another district.

5. Relatively few minority superintendents have spent their entire professional careers in the same district.

6. Fewer than half (49.2%) of minority superintendents said it took less than a year to find their first superintendency.

#### Perceptions, attitudes, and opinions

The perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of minority superintendents were described in the following manner:

1. Very few minority superintendents cited the “old boy/old girl” network as a hindrance to gaining the superintendency.

2. Minority superintendents perceived discrimination as a major problem in hiring practices. This compares to 16.6 % of nonminority superintendents.

3. The use of research in the superintendency by minority superintendents was perceived as more essential than nonminority superintendents.

In summary, this study clearly raises the level of awareness of the commonalties and differences between different groups of superintendents.

### Burnham's Study

Burnham's (1989) study was sponsored by AASA and The University of Texas, at Austin, In Pursuit of Excellence in the Superintendency, has been cited in numerous research studies on the career paths and career patterns of superintendents. This national study focused specifically on the differences between effective superintendents and typical superintendents on several career paths dimensions. Specifically she examined the participant's: (a) formal graduate preparation experiences, (b) non-formal professional experience career paths, and (c) career patterns. Additionally, the study compared the career paths and career patterns of male and female superintendents for the differences between the two groups.

There were 1,008 superintendents in her study who represented two groups--effective superintendents and typical superintendents. There was a total of 93 superintendents who were identified as effective superintendents through a nomination process. To be included in the study, individuals in the effective superintendent's group had to be nominated by five educational organizations in their home states. The criteria for selection were those identified by the National School Boards Association and used with its Executive Educator awards program.

The other group, typical superintendents, was composed of 915 superintendents who were drawn from a random sample from the data based obtained from the United States Department of Education and were selected by a university research staff.

The sample was composed of 360 superintendents from metropolitan locations and 647 from non-metropolitan areas. The effective superintendent group consisted of 35 from the metropolitan locations and 57 from non-metropolitan areas. The ethnicity of the participants was provided by 741 of the respondents. There were 731 White, five African Americans, four Hispanics, and one Native American respondents.

#### Classroom positions

Burnham found that women were more likely than men to have been elementary teachers (55% of the women compared to 23% of the men). The majority of superintendents had secondary teaching and administrative experience. The respondents indicated that only a third of the women's previous experience was as teacher/coach (7%), with 34% of the men holding this position. Her study also found that a significantly higher proportion of women had served as counselors early in their careers.

### Building level administration

Burnham also found that men had held secondary principalships (52%) and women held elementary principalships (34%) in route to the superintendency. In the typical group men averaged 6.14 years and women averaged 3.62 years of service.

### Central office administration

In Burnham's study a higher proportion of women were more likely than men to have held high level central office positions (34% compared to 31%). She found that women averaged 5.11 years in central office administration compared to 3.29 years for men in the effective superintendents group. In the typical group men averaged 6.09 years and women averaged 3.27.

### Career path groups

Burnham also analyzed the career paths of 185 of her participants, including 90 from the effective superintendents subsample and 95 from the typical subsample. From that analysis, she constructed eight identifiable career paths. Furthermore, she reduced these eight career paths into four overall "superpath groups."

In Path Group A, the superintendents had experience at the building administration level, but had no central office level experience. This path represented 31% of all individuals in the career path study.

Path Group B included superintendents that had served in the principalship and had held at least one other non-teaching position prior to the superintendency. This path represented 47% of all individuals involved in the career path study.

The superintendents in Path Group C had the widest range of experiences. It represented 9% of all individuals in the career path study subsample. The careers of this group included building level (administration) experience, in addition to other mid-level non-principal roles and high-level central office experience.

The Path Group D was characterized as the “fast track.” It consisted of non-traditional path group members since these superintendents had no building level administration experience. Most of the group members had held only high level central office positions before reaching the superintendency. This group represented 8% of the subsample for the career path study.

In summary, the findings from Burnham's study indicate that the most conventional career path followed by the largest number of superintendents was to begin work as a teacher, move to assistant principal or principal, and then to the superintendency. Only 12% of the effective superintendent group, however, followed this career path.

Generally, the effective superintendent's path was one of teacher--central office--superintendent, avoiding building level experiences (e.g., principal or assistant principal) altogether. The majority of the effective superintendent sample was drawn from non-metropolitan areas which necessitated the superintendent supervising a number of central office specialists in such areas as personnel, curriculum, and finance. This career path was described as moving directly from the building level to the superintendent. With respect to gender, the Burnham study also revealed that women superintendents are more likely to have served as elementary principals and directors of instruction or curriculum than their male counterparts.

One of the limitations of her study that she mentions is "that it did not include an analysis of minority superintendent career experiences" (p. 80). Based on the finding of her study, Burnham recommends a study to examine minority

superintendents' career paths, which could be useful in providing support and guidance to minority superintendents. She adds, a sample that examined differences between minority superintendents and majority superintendents, particularly in view of these findings for the effective and females samples, could prove useful in providing support and guidance to minority administrators. This information could provide direction to those in positions of leadership in ways to encourage minorities to move up the administrative ladder to the superintendency." However it is not the intent or scope of this paper to provide such an analysis.

### **Conclusions**

Historically, minorities have been underrepresented in public school leadership positions, especially at the top position, the superintendency. In most organizations, the representation of minorities in the overall work population, and especially in the most powerful positions, is highly skewed (Cox, 1994). This trend is also reflected in public school organizations. Not until the last three decades were African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans appointed to the superintendency (Jones & Montenegro, 1983).



Another examination of employment trends for minority public school administrators presents a different pattern. According to an AASA (1985) study of public school administrators in 41 states and the District of Columbia, three percent of the superintendents, nine percent of the assistant superintendents, and 17% of the principals were individuals from racial or ethnic minority groups. In comparison to 1981-1982 statistics, these figures represent a two percent increase in female and minority superintendents and a five percent gain at the school principal level. The study also revealed that of the 11,055 male and female school administrators surveyed, Hispanics constituted 1.4% of the superintendents; African Americans were one percent; American Indians were 0.5%; and Asian Americans were 0.1%. African Americans accounted for the largest share of assistant superintendent and principal positions in the group. Hispanics were the second minority group at both administrative levels.

To underscore the problem of the underrepresentation of minorities in public school administration, a recent report revealed another alarming fact. The minority teaching population is declining (Consortium for Minorities in Teaching Careers, 1992). This is alarming because accessing educational administrative positions as has been delineated in this paper, begins with the possession of

teaching credentials and teaching experience. Considering the already low number of minority teachers, it is obvious that the pool of potential minority public school administrators will be even smaller in the future.

To impact these numbers in the future, increasing the number of minorities entering and completing teacher education programs and employment as teachers is a first step. An examination of the formal and informal barriers and plans to eliminate these barriers are just as important. Accessibility to public leadership positions relates to having the knowledge of the opportunities and a belief that there is a possibility to advance to the position. The second phase of accessibility requires one to believe it is possible to advance to such a position after acquiring the necessary skills and experiences. Aspiring minority administrators have only to look at the past practices of school districts in the appointment and retention of minorities in leadership positions to feel a sense of hopelessness in the pursuit of leadership positions in public school administration (Thompson, 1992).

The reasons why minorities are underrepresented in public leadership positions are numerous. Many minorities face formidable attitudinal barriers when pursuing public leadership positions. Murray, Husk, and Simms (1993) describe several formidable attitudinal barriers that exist for minorities when

pursuing leadership positions: (a) lack of peer acceptance, (b) subject to subtle or overt acts of racism and sexism, (c) subordinates challenging their authority; (d) limits being placed on their decision-making responsibility; and (e) lack of role models, mentors, and sponsors. While this is not an exhaustive list of barriers resulting in the underrepresentation of minorities, it does provide a scope of the barriers that aspiring minority school leaders might or are likely to face.

Staffing patterns are as important to the educational renewal process as curriculum. The best policy decisions will come from school organizations that include a variety of viewpoints. Members of minority and women groups may have unique perspectives on certain problems; perspectives that can broker and enrich the decision-making process at every level (Coursen, 1975).

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology and Research Design**

The design and methodology for this study will be discussed in this chapter. The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths and patterns of African American superintendents and describe the extent of selected characteristics found in the school districts prior and during their tenure as superintendents. The career paths and patterns of African American superintendents were analyzed using self reports of experiences leading to the superintendency. To examine the differences in prior and current school district characteristics, the following variables were examined: the financial support, demographic information about the school district's community, board of education, and teachers of the district. This chapter is divided into seven sections. Section one provides a general overview of descriptive survey research. The second section describes the design of this study. The selection of subjects is described in the third section. Instrumentation for the study is described in the fourth section. The fifth section provides descriptions about the data collection for the study. Data analysis is discussed in the sixth section. The final section identifies the limitations for the study.

## **Introduction of Survey Research**

Survey methods are among the oldest techniques for conducting research (Dane, 1990; Rubin & Babbie, 1993). Survey research is a general description given to a variety of research methods that share a common goal--to produce statistics that are quantitative or numerical descriptions of some aspects of the study's population. The use of survey research involves obtaining information directly from groups or individuals. Furthermore, survey research may be utilized for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

Survey research methodology involves obtaining information directly from the respondents by posing appropriate questions. The questions may be presented orally, on paper, or in some combination, but responses come from the persons to whom the question is addressed (Dane, 1990). Thus, the researcher and respondents are working together to collect data. The researcher asks the question and the respondent responds.

Description is perhaps the most frequent purpose for survey methodology. There are three types of information that are obtained from survey participants: facts, opinions, and behaviors. Most surveys include all three types of information. The words used to describe the different types of information

may be familiar, but they have specific meanings in the context of survey methodology (Dane, 1990). The three types of content information: fact, opinions and behavior that are obtained from surveys are briefly described below.

In survey research, facts are characteristics available to anyone who knows how to observe and interpret them. Often called demographic characteristics, facts may include variables such as age, race, gender, income, and education level. Facts are anything that can be verified independently (Dane, 1990). In some surveys, facts are a somewhat misleading label because respondents' self-reports are not accepted without independent verification (p. 122).

Opinions in survey research are expression of a respondent's preference, feeling, or behavioral intention. Opinions can be measured objectively but cannot be verified independently. The major difference between facts and opinions concerns the agreement about the way in which the two can be operationally defined (Dane, 1990).

The third type of content information gathered from surveys is behavior, which refers to an action completed by a respondent. Like facts, behaviors can be verified, but only if a witness or indirect evidence can be obtained. Most surveys

include all three types of information. Dane (1990) asserts, “there is a tendency to disregard distinction among them” (p. 123).

Survey research is the appropriate mode of inquiry for making inferences about a large group of people. The basic aim of survey research is to describe the variability of certain features of a population. The logic of survey research gives distinctive style to the research process; the type of instruments are determined by the information needed. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen survey methodology as the mode of inquiry to examine the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents. This methodology was appropriate to examine selected characteristics of the school districts prior to the appointment of the superintendents studied.

There are three types of surveys: mail, telephone, and personal interview. Survey research has advantages and disadvantages to its applications. Marshall and Rossman (1989) note the relative advantages and disadvantages of survey research that are highlighted through the following criteria: (1) appropriateness of the method to the problem studied, (2) accuracy of measurement, (3) generalizability of findings, (4) administrative convenience, and (5) avoidance of ethical or difficulties in the research process (p. 84).

### **Design of the Study**

The design of this study utilized a descriptive survey approach to examine the career paths and career patterns of current African American superintendents in the US. An additional focus examined the extent of selected characteristics of school districts prior to their appointment of the superintendents. In summary the purpose of descriptive research is to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of a given population accurately and factually (Isaac & Michael, 1991). Descriptive research “is the accumulation of a data base that is essentially descriptive...” (Isaac & Michael, 1981, p. 46).

The use of survey methodology involving a questionnaire provided the researcher with a method of data collection that was efficient and systematic. It also allowed the study to include the entire population in the U.S. of African American superintendents. The data solicited was quantifiable and could be expressed in numerical values to facilitate data interpretation. The focus was primarily on factual information with only limited attention to opinions. The intent of this research study was to describe the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents and the extent of selected characteristics of school districts prior to the superintendent’s appointment.



In Chapter I, three research questions that guided this study were identified. The following provides a delineation of subquestions to further define the study:

1. What were the career paths and career patterns experiences of African American superintendents that led to their ascension to the position of superintendent?
  - 1a. What formal academic preparation experiences are characteristic of African American superintendents?
  - 1b. What are the career path characteristics of African American superintendents?
  - 1c. What are the career pattern characteristics of African American superintendents?
2. What was the nature of selected characteristics of the school district prior to and during their tenure as superintendent?
  - 2a. What are the relationships between changes in district characteristics?
3. What are the racial barriers perceived by those seeking the position of superintendent?

- 3a. What are the common racial barriers faced by African Describe the racial barriers faced by African American superintendents?
- 3b. Are African American superintendents aware of sponsored mobility?

### **Selection of Subjects**

The population identified for this study included all male and female African American superintendents serving in United States public schools during the 1996-97 school year. An African American superintendent was defined as a chief executive officer of a local public school system who was of African American ethnicity. The total population of these superintendents was analyzed as stratified samples that reflected different district types and sizes. Table 3.1 represents the states that had identifiable African American superintendents. The database for the selection of subjects was obtained from the founder of the National Black Alliance of School Educators during the fall of 1996. Furthermore, the list was updated from other national and state educational organizations to provide current data and eliminate the possibility of duplication. Initially the list contained 223 superintendents. Responses which indicated changes in appointments resulted in a current population of only 205 superintendents.

Procedures involved seeking responses from the entire population.

Responses were reviewed and special effort made to survey minimum numbers in all six geographic regions and representing large, medium and small districts as well as all kinds of communities.

The survey questionnaire designated a response rate of 52%. Reminder cards were sent to all not responding by the designated time. With a response rate of approximately 48%, telephone calls were utilized to selectively encourage further responses from various regions and types of districts. The final results of responses are shown in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.1**

**IDENTIFIED AFRICAN AMERICAN SUPERINTENDENTS BY STATE  
AS OF FEBRUARY 1997**

Alabama - 12	Mississippi - 33
Arkansas - 5	Missouri - 3
California - 18	New Jersey - 22
Colorado - 1	New York - 8
Connecticut - 3	North Carolina - 7
Delaware - 2	Ohio - 6
District of Columbia - 1	Oklahoma - 0
Florida - 2	Rhode Island - 0
Georgia - 4	South Carolina - 16
Illinois - 16	Texas - 10
Indiana - 4	Tennessee - 2
Louisiana - 2	Virginia - 5
Maryland - 2	Washington - 1
Michigan - 15	Wisconsin - 3
Minnesota - 1	U.S. Virgin Islands - 1

**Table 3.2****GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES**

Region	Frequency	Percent
North East	15	14.1 %
North Central	29	27.3 %
South	38	35.8 %
South East	17	16.0 %
Far West	7	6.6 %
Total responses 106		Total 100.0%

**STATES BY REGION (RESPONSES)**

North East		North Central		South		South East		Far West	
Connecticut	1	Illinois	14	Alabama	4	D. of C.	1	California	6
Delaware	1	Indiana	2	Arkansas	1	N. Carolina	6	Colorado	1
Maryland	1	Michigan	6	Florida	1	S. Carolina	7		
New Jersey	10	Ohio	5	Louisiana	1	Virginia	3		
New York	2	Wisconsin	2	Mississippi	20				
				Texas	9				
				Tennessee	2				
Sub Total	15		29		38		17		7

## **Instrumentation**

In designing and refining the questions for the survey instrument, the researcher reviewed several instruments that were applicable to this study (Holliman, 1996; Shepherd, 1996; AASA, 1992; Hudson, 1991; Burnham, 1989; Jones, 1985; Moody, 1971). Items from these instruments were modified and incorporated into the instrumentation design. Additionally, the researcher incorporated technical strategies for questionnaire design advocated by a variety of noteworthy sources (Fink, 1995; Fowler, 1993; Rubin & Babbie, 1993; Foddy, 1993; Isaac & Michael, 1981). The instrumentation utilized in this study consisted of a single descriptive survey questionnaire. The descriptive survey questionnaire was developed, pilot-tested, revised, and mailed to all the 223 superintendents in the population. The descriptive survey questionnaire consisted of four sections with a total of 32 questions: (1) Biographical data on each superintendent was collected; (2) selected of career paths and career patterns of each superintendent, details regarding the selected characteristics of each superintendent's school district and school board members, and prior and current demographics. The final section contained a question that requested each

superintendent to reflect on the racial barriers faced by those seeking the position of superintendent.

The instrumentation utilized in this study consisted of two types of questioning: closed-ended and opened-ended. Questions 1-31 utilized closed-ended questions. The content of these questions focused on factual responses from the participants. The goal of these questions was to have each participant respond accurately. Question 32 was an open-ended question constructed to elicit a personal reflection from each participant. The researcher felt that this type of questioning was appropriate because of the wide range of responses anticipated.

#### Review and Pilot Study

A draft of the survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher under the guidance of members of the dissertation committee and reviewed by six educational administrators. The six reviewers were requested to critique the items for clarity, ease in completion of the survey items, and adequacy of the content of the questions in obtaining the information desired to answer the research questions. Based on the feedback from the six reviewers, the instrument was modified, edited and revised. The researcher faxed the revised survey questionnaire to Charles Moody, Sr., a noted researcher on African American

superintendents for an extensive review. After survey instrument refinement, a pilot study was undertaken.

A pilot study was conducted to gather information for the following purposes: (1) to gather data regarding the internal reliability of questionnaire items, (2) to identify questionnaire items that needed to be added or deleted, and (3) to check for clarity of instruction. The pilot study was conducted by administering the descriptive survey questionnaire to a panel consisting of a total of five educational researchers and former superintendents. Each participant in the pilot study was given a cover letter describing the proposed study and a copy of the survey instrument. The cover letter for the pilot study explained the purpose of the study and requested the subject's participation. The participants were requested to answer each item and comment on the appropriateness and clarity of the survey instrument. Each participant in the pilot study completed and returned the survey instrument. None of the respondents indicated any difficulty in completing the items in the questionnaire. The analysis of the pilot study data was done by the researcher and a research consultant to determine the reliability of the each survey item in the questionnaire. Data gathered from the pilot study revealed that each item thoroughly and appropriately assessed the



characteristics it intended to measure. Each survey item demonstrated a lack of response bias. The respondents did not offer any suggestions regarding the addition or deletions of questions, the clarification of instructions, or improvements in format.

### **Data Collection**

Packets of information pertaining to the study were mailed to each participant. Each packet included a cover letter, a copy of the survey instrument, and a postage paid self-addressed return envelope. The cover letter was individually signed by the researcher. Each survey was coded with an ID number to ensure the confidentiality of participants and provide a system for data tracking. The packets were mailed during the second week of February 1997. Prior to the mail out, materials were weighed at the US Postal Service to ensure that packets and return envelopes had adequate postage to enhance the proper handling to the participants. (See Appendix A and Appendix B for Cover Letter and Copy of Questionnaire.)

A reminder card was mailed to all non-respondents 14 days (first week in March) after the initial mailing. The card emphasized the importance of the study

and the desirability of a high rate of response. (See Appendix C for Reminder Card.) To increase the response rate, telephone calls were placed to non-respondents to encourage each superintendent to respond to the survey during the third week of March. A personalized thank you note was sent to each respondent upon receipt of the completed survey expressing the researcher's gratitude for their timely response to the survey instrument.

The response rate is the number who respond divided by the number of eligible respondents. The researcher was optimistic for a high response rate for several reasons. First, the superintendents who were surveyed were well-educated professionals and should have no problem understanding the questions posed. Questions were well thought-out and written in a logical manner. Also, the results of the study were likely to be of personal interest to the participants. However, some non-response was inevitable and anticipated by the researcher. Rubin's & Babbie's (1993) review of the literature revealed a wide range of response rates for adequate analysis and reporting. Furthermore, the authors stated that a response rate of at least fifty percent or better is usually considered adequate for analysis and reporting.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of making coherent meaning out of the raw data collected. Efficient management of the raw data is required, or the researcher will be overwhelmed with data. It is task of the researcher to organize the data into a workable format. This survey is designed to be descriptive in nature; however, there are some qualitative elements that were included to elicit the “voice” of the participants.

Each returned questionnaire was scanned for completeness and assigned an identification number. The assigned identification numbers were used for monitoring the response rate. Additionally, the identification number for each participant was used to facilitate follow-up mailings and personal telephone calls to non-respondents. The use of this coding system allowed for efficient manipulation of the raw data (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

The participants’ responses to the questionnaires were used for all data analyses and reporting. A code book was developed by the researcher for analyzing the responses to the questionnaire. Each response item on the questionnaire was assigned a code value to sort specific items for data analysis. The participant’s individual response item raw score was given one to six space

identifications in the code book depending on the response. A yes response on an individual item received a score of 1, and a no response received a score of 0.

Non-responses to survey items were deleted from data coding. Incomplete and missing response items were excluded from the statistical analysis. Responses to item #32 were used to add a qualitative element to the study. The responses to this item were reported verbatim, with patterns or themes emerging across the group for data reporting.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the quantitative data. SPSS is a data management and analysis software product. The descriptive statistics programs was used to analyze the data. Frequencies, means, ranges, and standard deviations were determined for independent samples in examining the relationship of variables.

#### Career Path and Pattern Analysis

Career paths were identified from the analysis of the reported experiences prior to becoming superintendent from item #7 *Career Path Sequence of Assignments*. A career path is defined as series of career steps leading to the superintendency that consist of a specific set of sequentially held educational positions (Burnham, 1989). An example of a typical career path would consist of:

teacher → assistant principal → principal → central office → assistant superintendent → superintendent. The assignment data were analyzed for commonalties in career path sequences. Commonalties consisted of the number of assignments, length of assignments, and number of repetition in assignments. Additionally, a Chi square analysis was used to reveal differences between graduates of historically Black colleges and universities and non-graduates of those institutions with respect to their career path commonalties.

Career patterns were analyzed using the data from items #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #10, #26, #27, #28, #29, #30, and #31. A career pattern is defined as set of group or individuals identifiable characteristics. Examples of career patterns for this study include the following but are limited to: age of first superintendency; number of different school districts employed throughout career; highest degree earned; and salary range. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to examine the extent of variables of career patterns of African American superintendents in the population.

#### Selected School District Characteristics Analysis

Prior and current selected school district characteristics were analyzed from items #11, #12, #13, #14, #15, #16, #17, #18, #19, #20, #21, #22, #23, #24,

and #25. For the purpose of this study selected school district characteristics included: (1) number of schools in the district, (2) operating expense per-pupil, (3) student enrollment, (4) ethnic percentage of the students, (5) racial and gender of school board members, (6) racial identity of teachers, and (7) racial composition of the community. The data from the sample was analyzed using frequencies, means, standard deviation to measure relationships between each prior and current selected school district characteristic.

#### Mentorship/Sponsorship Analysis

For this study mentorship/sponsorship was measured by survey items #8 and #9. Mentorship/Sponsorship is defined as formal or informal engagement in a professional relationship with an individual or individuals to provide career assistance, offer advice, and guidance for career mobility (Little, 1980). The data from the sample were analyzed using frequencies and means of the survey items.

#### Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which a survey instrument assesses what it purports to measure (Fink, 1995). Each participant in the present study received the same set of questions. An effort was made to ensure that the questions were analyzed and interpreted in the same manner for all participants. The researcher

used closed-ended questions to solicit answers that would be appropriate for the focus of the study. Additionally, the researcher used an open-ended question to solicit the kind of response that was desired for that particular theme. Because the descriptive survey was conducted by mail, interviewer bias was not a concern.

Fowler (1993) identified four basic reasons why survey respondents might not report information with less than perfect accuracy for data analysis and reporting. The reasons were: a lack of knowledge about issues or concerns, problems with recall of information, questions not reviewed for clarity and understanding, and report of sensitive items. However, these were not considered to be problems in this study.

#### Rationale for Survey Questions

The survey instrument was developed to describe selected conditions of African American superintendents identified in the literature. These conditions were: (1) career paths and career patterns, (2) selected characteristics of school district, current and prior to appointment, (3) biographical data, and (4) perceived racial barriers.

## Section I Career Paths and Career Patterns

Responses to Section I and III of the survey instrument were used to answer **Research Question 1: What were the career path and career patterns experiences of African American superintendents that led to their ascension to the position of superintendent?** The career patterns of African American superintendents were analyzed in terms of career paths and educational positions. Career paths and career patterns were examined in questions 1-7 in terms of several separate but related dimensions. The dimensions include the following:

- Number of school districts employed throughout career.
- Years of service as a classroom teacher.
- Number of school districts served as superintendent.
- Number of years in current superintendency.
- Sequence of educational positions held (e.g., elementary teacher, secondary teacher, assistant principal, principal...superintendent).

Questions 8 and 9 in the questionnaire were designed to gather information about sponsorship or mentorship. The importance of having a sponsor or mentor is highlighted in the literature. Also emphasized in the literature is the perception



of a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in the selection of superintendents. The questions required a yes or no response. They are as follows:

- Is there a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in your state that helps individuals get positions as superintendents?
- Have you actively sponsored other African Americans who aspire to the superintendency?

Additional information on the career paths and career patterns were addressed in questions 26-31. The following information was gathered from the respondents:

- Gender of respondents
- Place of birth of respondents
- Martial status of respondents
- Highest earned educational degree
- Graduate of a historically Black college or university
- Salary range of the respondents

Responses to Section II of the survey instrument answered **Research Question**

**2: What was the nature of selected characteristics of the school district prior to their appointment as superintendent?** The selected characteristics of the superintendent’s school district were used to analyze prior and current status.

Questions were asked about selected characteristics to provide a better understanding about the general conditions of school districts for prospective African American superintendents. The selected characteristics analyzed were:

- Number of schools in district
- Gender and ethnicity of predecessor
- Operating expense per pupil
- Student enrollment
- Ethnic and racial demographics of school district
- Ethnic, racial identity and gender of school board
- Ethnic and racial identity of teachers
- Ethnic and racial identity of community served

Responses to Section IV of the survey instrument answered **Research**

**Question 3:** What are the perceived barriers faced by those seeking the position of superintendent? The information gathered from this question provided data concerning perceived racial barriers facing African Americans seeking the superintendency.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this research study. First, the study is limited by the design, researcher bias, and the selection of the participants. The goal of this descriptive survey is to provide rich description about the career path and career pattern experiences for current African American superintendents. An additional focus examines the extent of characteristics of school districts prior to their appointment as superintendent.

The survey response is dependent on the willingness of the respondents to share and return personal information. The collection of data is dependent upon the willingness of the participants to share personal information about their career paths, career pattern experiences and the extent of selected conditions of their school districts with the researcher.

Second, in documenting the rich description, researcher bias may occur in the processing of information, data gathering, and drawing conclusions. As an African American, the researcher acknowledges his association with a study referencing African American superintendents. However, this bias is viewed as an asset and not as a hindrance. The survey will provide a foundation for quantitative and qualitative research on African American superintendents.

The selection of the population of African American superintendents posed a number of concerns: (1) the number of African American superintendents may fluctuate with the employment of the participants during the 1996-97 school year; and (2) there are limitations on the thoroughness of the national survey list. Despite, the researchers best effort to update the accuracy of the national survey list for actual employed African American superintendent for the 1996-97 school year, there was a variance for actual employed African American superintendents and the national survey list.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the career paths and patterns of African American superintendents and to describe the extent of selected characteristics found in their school districts prior to and during their tenure as superintendents. The career paths and patterns of African American superintendents were analyzed using self reports of experiences leading to the superintendency. To examine the differences in prior and current school district characteristics, the following variables were examined: operating expense per pupil, demographic information about the school district's community, board of education, and teachers of the district. Specifically, the study was based on the following research questions:

1. What were the career paths and career pattern experiences of African American superintendents leading to their ascension to the position of superintendent?
  - 1a. What formal, academic preparation experiences are characteristic of African American superintendents?
  - 1b. What are the career paths that characterize African American superintendents?

- 1c. What are the career patterns that characterize African American superintendents?
- 2. What was the nature of selected characteristics of the school district prior to and during their tenure as superintendent?
  - 2a. What are the relationships between changes in school district characteristics?
- 3. What are the racial barriers perceived by those seeking the position of superintendent?
  - 3a. What are the most and least common racial barriers faced by African American superintendents?
  - 3b. Are African American superintendents aware of sponsored mobility?

The four sections of this chapter present an analysis of the data gathered from the descriptive questionnaire that was initially mailed to participants in February 1997. Responses to survey questions are presented and analyzed in the order of the descriptive questionnaire. Tables and figures are used extensively to report the data from the analyses throughout this chapter. The questionnaire contained one open-ended question that is also analyzed in a qualitative format. Section one provides biographical data on the population of the study. The

survey results are presented in section two, which provide a statistical analysis to answer the research questions mentioned above and delineated in chapter three. The final section provides a summary of the findings.

The study involved male and female African American superintendents serving in the United States public school systems during the 1996-97 school year. Returned responses indicated changes in appointments that resulted in a current and usable population of 202 superintendents. Of the 202 superintendents contacted by mail, 106 were returned for a usable return rate of 52.4 percent. Data was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire that was mailed to each superintendent in February 1997. Note: all percentages in the tables have been rounded to the second decimal place.

### **Biographical Data**

The survey respondents were primarily male; ages ranged between 42-70. The typical career path of teacher, principal, central office heavily dominates the African American superintendent (AASA, 1992). Each of these career steps requires training and years of experience. Table 4.1 shows the age of all the respondents. The mean of the respondents was 53.5. Respondents ranged in age

from 42 to 70. The age group that represented the highest frequency was between age 50-54.

**Table 4.1**

**AGE OF RESPONDENTS**

Age Group of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No Response	17	16
40-44	6	5.6
45-49	17	16
50-54	29	27.4
55-59	24	22.6
60-64	8	7.4
65-69	4	3.7
70 and over	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

Mean 53  
Maximum 71

Table 4.2 illustrates the distribution of survey respondents based on gender. Eighty-five (80.2%) of the respondents were male and twenty-one (19.8%) of the respondents were female. The statistics representing gender are less pronounced than the typical disparity between minority female and males superintendents found in public schools in the United States (AASA, 1992). In



the 1992 Study of the American School Superintendency: America's Leaders in a Time of Reform respondents were (93%) males and (7%) female.

**Table 4.2**

**GENDER OF RESPONDENTS**

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Male	85	80.2
Female	21	19.8
Total	106	100

Table 4.3 represents the distribution of the survey respondents based on current marital status. Most of the respondents (83%) were married. Only sixteen (17%) were single, divorced, separated, widowed, or other. (AASA, 1992) suggested that superintendents may be expected to be a role model in terms of family values. This reason may explain the high rate of married superintendents for the respondents in this study. The 83% of current married African Americans is somewhat lower than all superintendents (92%) in the United States.

**Table 4.3**

**MARITAL STATUS**

Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Single	1	.9
Divorced/Separated	13	12.3
Widowed	3	2.8
Married	88	83.0
Other	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

Respondents were asked to indicate the highest degree earned. The respondents were given the following choices: Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science; Master of Arts/ Master of Science; Master of Education; Specialist; Doctor of Education, and Doctor of Philosophy. While the required educational degree for most superintendent positions across the United States is a master's degree, 68.9 percent of the survey respondents had a doctoral degree. These figures represent a pattern far exceeding that of the total superintendent group in the United States according to AASA (1992), which reported that a total of 36 percent held doctoral degrees. Table 4.4 provides information on the highest

degree held by respondents. Fifty-two (49.2%) held Ed. D.'s, and twenty-one (19.8%) held Ph. D.'s.

**Table 4.4**

**HIGHEST DEGREE HELD**

<b>Degree Held</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
BA/BS	1	.9
MA/MS	6	5.7
M.Ed.	12	11.3
Specialist	13	12.3
Ed.D	52	49.2
Ph.D.	21	19.8
Other	1	.9
Total	106	100

The respondents were asked to indicate if they were graduates of a historically Black college or university. (See Appendix D for a list of historically Black colleges and universities.) Sixty-one (58%) of the respondents indicated that they were graduates of this type of college or university. Forty-five (42.5%)

of the respondents indicated they were not graduates of historically Black colleges or universities.

**Table 4.5**

**GRADUATES OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES  
AND UNIVERSITIES**

Responses	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No	45	42.5
Yes	61	57.5
Total	106	100.0

Table 4.6 illustrates the salary range of all respondents. The salary range was between \$40,000 as a minimum to more than \$129,000. The most frequent category of the respondents was \$100,000 to \$110,000. This finding shows an increase in salaries for African American superintendents' salaries compared to Hudson's (1991) study, which indicated the most frequent range was \$40,000 to \$49,999. In addition, the respondents were also higher than the AASA (1992) study, which indicated the most frequent salary range was above \$49,000.

**Table 4.6**

**SALARY CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS**

Salary Categories	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No Response	2	1.8
\$40,000-\$49,000	1	.9
\$50,000-\$59,000	7	6.6
\$60,000-\$69,000	14	13.2
\$70,000-\$79,000	8	7.5
\$80,000-\$89,000	18	17.0
\$90,000-\$99,000	13	12.3
\$100,000-\$110,000	19	17.9
\$120,000-\$129,000	9	8.5
More than \$129,000	15	14.2
Total	106	100

**Type of Positions Held Prior to Superintendency**

Respondents were asked to indicate the sequence of the positions they had served in before they secured their first superintendency. Table 4.7 shows the positions held by respondents.

**Classroom Positions**

A higher percentage of respondents had been employed as secondary classroom teachers (70.8%) than elementary classroom teachers (40.6%). Some of the secondary teachers had served as elementary classroom teacher also. Only (4.7%) of the respondents were employed as teacher aides. Additionally the

respondents indicated that (20.8%) were employed as a counselor, and (19.8%) held supervisory positions on their first path to the superintendency.

#### Building Level Positions

At the building level, the respondents indicated that (52.8%) had served as secondary principals compared to (38.7%) as elementary principals. The respondents also indicated that (51.9%) had served as assistant secondary principals compared to (15.1%) as assistant principals.

#### Central Office Positions

The respondents indicated that (30.2%) held director or coordinator positions at the central office. In addition to those positions, high level central office positions were held by (17.9%) of the respondents. While (51.9%) percent of the respondents held the position of assistant superintendent.

**Table 4.7**

**POSITIONS HELD PRIOR TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY**

<b>Positions held by Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Teacher Aide	5	4.7
Elementary Teacher	43	40.6
Secondary Teacher	75	70.8
Counselor	22	20.8
Supervisor	21	19.8
Ass't. Elem. Principal	14	15.1
Ass't. Sec. Principal	55	51.9
Elementary Principal	41	38.7
Secondary Principal	56	52.8
Director-Coordinator	32	30.2
High-Level Central Off.	19	17.9
Ass't. Superintendent	55	51.9
Other	24	22.6

**Career Paths**

The career paths designated for this study are those similar to Burnham (1989) in her national superintendents study. However, the researcher added several additional positions for analysis. The additional individual positions were combined to create a limited number of designations. These were then used to produce simplified career path groupings. Those additional positions are underlined in the descriptions below.

### Career Path Position Designations

(1) The teacher assistant designation for all career paths includes individuals serving in the following roles: elementary teaching assistant, secondary teaching assistant, and Title I assistant.

(2) Teacher designation for all career paths includes individuals serving in the following roles: elementary teacher, secondary teacher, and any combination of those categories (e.g., elementary and secondary teacher).

(3) Principal designation for all career paths include individuals serving in the following roles: elementary principal, secondary principal, and/or both elementary and secondary levels.

(4) Assistant principal designation for all career paths includes individuals serving in the following roles: elementary assistant principal, secondary assistant principal, and/or assistant principal at both the elementary and secondary levels.

(5) Mid-level non principal positions include individuals in one or more of these categories: (a) counselor, (b) department chair, (c) head teacher, (d) supervisor.

(6) High-level central office positions include individuals serving in one or both of the following central office categories: director and coordinator.



(7) Assistant superintendent designation for all career paths includes individuals serving in the following roles: assistant, associate, or deputy superintendent at the central office level.

(8) The designation of Other for all career paths includes individual serving in the following roles: assistant professor, professor, director of a state educational agency, supervisor in a state educational agency, researcher, dean of a college, consultant, and deputy chancellor.

The findings from this study revealed 78 different career paths for the respondents (See Appendix E for a list of individual career paths). To allow for further analysis the researcher collapsed the 79 career paths into four major super career path groups following Burnham's (1989) model. Table 4.8 shows the respondents' individual career paths sorted under each of the four super career path groups.

#### Path Group A: Traditional Short Route

In Path Group A, the respondents served as either a teaching assistant, elementary teacher, secondary teacher, elementary or secondary assistant principal, or elementary or secondary principal but had no central office

experience of any kind. This career path was the third most common of the four path, accounting for 28% of all respondents.

#### Path Group B: Traditional Intermediate Route

In Path Group B, the respondents served in one non teaching position other than assistant principal or principal before obtaining the superintendency. This was the most frequent career path of the four path groups, accounting for 40% of the respondents.

#### Path Group C: Traditional Long Route

Path Group C represents those respondents who came up through the ranks (Holliman, 1996; DeValcourt, 1991; Burnham, 1989). In this career path group, experiences included teaching and building administration positions along with one or more mid level positions as well as one or more high-level central office positions. This group was the second most frequented group by the respondents. It accounted for 30% of all respondents.

#### Path Group D: Non-Traditional Route

Path Group D was a unique and non traditional career path group. It is considered the shortest route to the superintendency. Burnham (1989) notes this group as the “fast track” group because the respondents in her study typically

moved from teacher positions to a high-level central office positions prior to obtaining the superintendency. This group accounted for 2% of all African American respondents. By far, this was the least frequented of the four career path groups.

**Table 4.8**

**CAREER PATH GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS**

Path Group of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Path Group A	30	28
Path Group B	42	40
Path Group C	32	30
Path Group D	2	2
Total	106	100.0

Table 4.9 shows the number of positions held by respondents prior to becoming superintendent. Path Group A respondents held an average of 3 positions. Path Group B respondents held an average of 4 positions. Path Group C respondents held an average of 6 positions. For respondents in Path Group D which was a unique and non-traditional career path group, the average position held was .5 prior to becoming a superintendent.

**Table 4.9**

**NUMBER OF POSITIONS HELD BY PATH GROUP PRIOR TO  
THE SUPERINTENDENCY**

<b>Path Group of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Positions</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Path Group A	3	28
Path Group B	4	40
Path Group C	6	30
Path Group D	.5	2
Total		100.0

The number of years of service by each path group is shown in Table 4.10. For respondents in Path Group C the average number of years served in positions leading to the superintendency was 24 years. As noted earlier this path group was the traditional long route for the respondents. The average for Path Groups A and B was 22 years. Path Group D, the non-traditional route, had an average of one year for number of years in positions leading to the superintendency.

**Table 4.10**

**NUMBER OF YEARS OF SERVICE BY PATH GROUP PRIOR TO  
THE SUPERINTENDENCY**

Path Group of Respondents	Years of Service	Percent of Respondents
Path Group A	22	28
Path Group B	22	40
Path Group C	24	30
Path Group D	1	2
Total		100.0

Table 4.11 shows the respondents career path group sorted by district type. Path Group A was the most dominant path group of the respondents from rural school districts. Path Groups A and B were found in equal numbers in urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Path Group C was the dominant path group in urban school districts. Path Group D which had only two respondents was found only in this path group.

**Table 4.11**

**CAREER PATHS OF DISTRICT TYPE (Number of respondents)**

	Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Rural
<b>Path Group A</b>	5	3	4	18
<b>Path Group B</b>	12	12	6	12
<b>Path Group C</b>	22	6	2	2
<b>Path Group D</b>	2	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	41	21	12	32

Table 4.12 shows the career paths of gender. Males were found mostly in Path Group B followed by Path Groups A and C. Females were found mostly in Path Group C followed by Path Group B and A.

**Table 4.12**

**CAREER PATHS OF GENDER**

Path Group	Male	Female
<b>Path Group A</b>	25	5
<b>Path Group B</b>	33	6
<b>Path Group C</b>	25	10
<b>Path Group D</b>	2	0
<b>Total</b>	85	21

The age and career path of respondents are shown in Table 4.13. The respondents were divided into two groups. The younger group was 51 years old or less and the elder group was 52 years old and more. The younger group was associated with mostly with Career Path Groups A and B. Career Path Groups B and C were mostly associated with the elder group.

**Table 4.13**

**AGE AND CAREER PATH OF RESPONDENTS**

<b>Path Group</b>	<b>Younger</b>	<b>Elder</b>
<b>Path Group A</b>	16 (15%)	14 (13.2%)
<b>Path Group B</b>	15 (14.1%)	27 (25.4%)
<b>Path Group C</b>	6 (5.6%)	26 (24.5%)
<b>Path Group D</b>	0	2 (2.8%)
<b>Total</b>	37	69

The number of respondents who held no building level administrative experience is shown in Table 4.14. The number of respondents is shown by district type and percentage of district type. The respondents (5) in suburban school districts had the largest number (24%) of who held no building level administrative experience prior to becoming superintendent.

**Table 4.14**

**NO BUILDING LEVEL ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE**

Type of District	Number of Respondent	Percent of District Type
Urban	3	2.8
Suburban	5	23.8
Small Town	1	8.3
Rural	0	0
Total	9	

Table 4.15 shows the number and percentage of respondents who held instructional supervisory positions prior to becoming superintendents. Supervisory positions also included director and coordinator. The data revealed that 50 percent of the respondents had served in this type of position prior to the superintendency.

**TABLE 4.15**

**RESPONDENTS WHO HELD INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORY POSITIONS**

Position	Number of Respondent	Percent of Respondents
Supervisor	21	19.8
Director/Coordinator	32	30.2
Total	53	50.0



Table 4.16 shows the number of positions held by the respondents prior to the superintendency. The range for number of positions was 0-9. The majority of the respondents had 3 or more position changes prior to becoming superintendent. A point of note is the respondent who had no positions changes prior to becoming superintendent. This individual was in unique career path and did not move from the traditional career path route.

**Table 4.16**

**NUMBER OF POSITIONS HELD BY RESPONDENTS PRIOR TO  
BECOMING SUPERINTENDENT**

Number of Positions	Number of Respondent	Percent of Respondents
0	1	.9
1	2	1.8
2	9	8.4
3	21	19.8
4	27	25.4
5	29	29
6	9	8.4
7	4	3.7
8	0	0
9	2	1.8
Total	106	100

### Career Patterns

The number of school districts the respondents have served in as an educator is shown in Table 4.17. Eighty-six (81.1%) of the 106 respondents had worked in two or more school districts as an educator during their careers. The statistical mean for this group was 2.88. This finding is consistent with AASA (1992), which found that 89.9% of its respondents had served in more than one school district during their careers.

**Table 4.17**

#### NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS EMPLOYED

Number of School Districts	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
0	3	2.8
1	17	16.0
2	28	26.4
3	26	24.5
4	16	15.1
5	11	10.4
6	3	2.8
7	2	1.9
Total	106	100

Mean 2.8  
Maximum 7

Table 4.18 shows the years of classroom experience reported by the respondents. Classroom experience ranged from 1-22 years, with an average of 7 years served as a classroom teacher.

**Table 4.18**

**YEARS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE**

Years of Service	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
0	4	3.8
1-4	31	29.2
5-9	46	43.4
10-14	17	16.
15-19	6	5.6
20-20+	2	1.8
Total	106	100.0

Mean 7  
Maximum 22

As Table 4.19 shows, 80 respondents (75.5%) were serving in their first district as superintendent of school, 23 (21.7%) had served in two or more school districts as superintendent. The mean for this group was 1.3.

**Table 4.19**

**NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED AS SUPERINTENDENT**

Number of School Districts	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
0	3	2.8
1	80	75.5
2	18	17.0
3	4	3.8
9	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

Mean 1.3  
Maximum 9

Table 4.20 shows the age of the respondents when they assumed their first superintendency. The range was from ages 23-70. Sixty-one (57.6%) of the respondents reported assuming their first superintendency during the ages of 40-49. The eldest respondent to assume the position was age 70. The mean for this group was 45.

**Table 4.20**

**AGE ASSUMED FIRST SUPERTINDENCY**

<b>Age of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
No response	2	1.9
20-29	3	2.7
30-39	15	14.2
40-49	61	57.5
50-59	22	20.7
60-69	2	1.9
70 and over	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

Mean 45  
Maximum 70

The superintendency is often perceived as a position with rapid turnover.

The mean for length of tenure for the respondents was 6.2 years. These results are reflected in Table 4.21. This data is consistent with findings from AASA, (1992). This data implies that the average respondent is in his or her second contract.

**Table 4.21****NUMBER OF YEARS IN CURRENT SUPERINTENDENCY**

<b>Years Served</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
No response	1	.9
1	14	13.2
2	12	11.3
3	16	15.1
4	18	17.0
5	10	9.4
6	7	6.6
7	5	4.7
8	6	5.7
9	3	2.8
10	4	3.8
12	1	.9
17	2	1.9
20	2	1.9
21	2	1.9
25	1	.9
44	1	.9
60	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

Mean 6  
Maximum 60

**Selection to the superintendency**

Respondents were asked to identify the group or individuals who managed the search process for their current superintendency. As Table 4.22 shows, 28 respondents (26.4%) used a professional search firm for their current

superintendency. Seventy-eight respondents (73.6%) did not use a professional search firm for their current superintendency.

**Table 4.22**

**USE OF PROFESSIONAL SEARCH FIRM FOR CURRENT  
SUPERINTENDENCY**

Profession Search Firm	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No	78	73.6
Yes	28	26.4
Total	106	100.0

The respondents indicated that 20 (18.9%) used the State Board of Education Association for their current superintendency search process. Eighty-four respondents (79.2) did not use a the State Board of Education for their current superintendency.

**Table 4.23**

**USE OF STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR CURRENT  
SUPERINTENDENCY**

State Board of Education Association	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No Response	2	1.9
No	84	79.2
Yes	20	18.9
Total	106	100.0

Only three respondents (2.8%) indicated that they had used the state educational administration for their selection process (Table 4.24). One hundred-one (95.3%) did not use the State Educational Administration Association for their current superintendency.

**Table 4.24**

**USE OF STATE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION ASSOCIATION  
FOR CURRENT SUPERINTENDENCY**

State Ed. Admin. Association	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No Response	2	1.9
No	101	95.3
Yes	3	2.8
Total	106	100.0



Based on the responses, the local school board managed the selection process of 56 respondents (52.8%) for their current position (Table 4.25). Forty-nine respondents (46.2%) did not use the local school board for their current superintendency. The majority of the respondents were selected by this process for their current superintendency.

**Table 4.25**

**USE OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD FOR CURRENT  
SUPERINTENDENCY**

<b>Local School Board</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
No Response	1	.9
No	49	46.2
Yes	56	52.8
Total	106	100.0

Respondents also indicated other methods in the selection process (Table 4.26). Eighteen respondents (17%) indicated a method other than the professional search firm, State Board of Education Association, State Educational Administration Association, and local school boards.

**Table 4.26**

**USE OF OTHER SELECTION PROCESS FOR CURRENT  
SUPERINTENDENCY**

<b>Other</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
No Response	1	.9
No	87	82.1
Yes	18	17.0
Total	106	100.0

**Characteristics of School Districts**

Respondents were asked to describe the type of district they served according to four categories: rural, small town, suburban, and urban. Table 4.27 details the type of districts they indicated. Two categories received the largest response: rural and urban. Of the 106 respondents, 33 (31%) indicated they served in a rural community, and 40 (37.7%) indicated they served in an urban district (Table 4.27).

**Table 4.27****TYPES OF SCHOOL DISTRICT SERVED**

<b>Size of School District</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Rural	33	31.1
Small Town	12	11.3
Suburban	21	19.8
Urban	40	37.7
Total	106	100.0

Table 4.27 shows that 59 of the respondents (55.7%) were preceded in their current school district as superintendent by a white superintendent and 43 of the respondents (40.6%) replaced an African American superintendent.

**Table 4.28****ETHNICITY OF PREDECESSOR**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
African American	43	40.6
Asian American	0	0
Hispanic	2	1.9
Native American	1	.9
White	59	55.7
Other	1	.9
Total	106	100.0

A paired t-test was used to compare current and prior school district characteristics on the following: operating expense per-pupil, student enrollment, and ethnicity of the student population. Table 4.29 shows the status, mean, significance of difference for each selected school district characteristic. Note that only two of the selected school district characteristics had a statistically significant difference in current and prior means. The increase in the current and the prior operating expense per-pupil and the decrease in the enrollment of White students were significant.

**Table 4.29**

**RELATIONSHIP OF OPERATING EXPENSE, OVERALL STUDENT ENROLLMENT, AND STUDENT ETHNIC POPULATION**

Status	Characteristic	Mean	Correlation	2-Tailed Significance
Current Prior	Operating expense per-pupil	\$ 4,527.69 \$ 3,766.38	.679	SIG
Current Prior	Student enrollment	23,749 21,991	.990	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Population African American	63.7 61.8	.823	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Population Hispanic	7.3 6.6	.911	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Population White	22.8 26	.866	SIG
Current Prior	Ethnic Population Asian American	2 1.3	.612	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Population Native American	.2 .3	.526	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Population Other	.9 1	.629	NS

Respondents were asked to identify the percentage of the ethnic composition of the teachers in their school districts prior to and current. Based on the responses, the superintendents indicated that 49% of their current teachers were White; 41% were African American; and 2% were Hispanic. A t-test revealed a significant difference in the statistical means for the current and prior African American teachers and White teachers, with small but significant increases in the number of African American and Hispanic teachers. A decline in the number of White teachers was noted (Table 4.30).

**Table 4.30**

**RELATIONSHIP OF CURRENT AND PRIOR TEACHER ETHNICITY**

Status	Ethnicity	Mean	Correlation	2-Tailed Significance
Current	Ethnic Teachers	40.6	.891	SIG
Prior	African American	38.1		
Current	Ethnic Teachers	2.3	.280	NS
Prior	Hispanic	2.2		
Current	Ethnic Teachers	49.4	.899	SIG
Prior	White	52.2		
Current	Ethnic Teachers	.5	.130	NS
Prior	Asian American	.6		
Current	Ethnic Teachers	0	.501	NS
Prior	Native American	.1		
Current	Ethnic Teachers	.3	.307	NS
Prior	Other	.2		

Respondents were asked to identify the current and the prior percentage of the ethnic composition of the community in their school districts. Based on the responses, the superintendents indicated that the composition of their communities was 36% White, 47% African American, 6% Hispanic, 1% Asian American, .2% Native American, and .7% Other. A t-test revealed a significant difference in the statistical means for the current and prior African American community composition. These figures are reported in Table 4.31.

**Table 4.31**

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRENT AND PRIOR ETHNIC  
COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>Status</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Correlation</b>	<b>2-Tailed Significance</b>
Current Prior	Ethnic Community African American	46.8 44.5	.909	SIG
Current Prior	Ethnic Community Hispanic	6.2 5.8	.900	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Community White	36.5 36.7	.877	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Community Asian American	1.4 .8	.763	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Community Native American	.2 .2	.973	NS
Current Prior	Ethnic Community Other	.7 1	.792	NS

Table 4.32 shows data to determine the means and relationship between female and male school board membership. Respondents were asked to identify the current and prior percentage of the ethnic composition of the school board in their school districts. The following table reveals the means for each female and male ethnic group. Note that there was a was a significant difference in the statistical means for current and prior African American school board members.

**Table 4.32**

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRENT AND PRIOR SCHOOL BOARD  
MEMBERSHIP**

Status	Characteristic	Mean	Correlation	2-Tailed Significance
Current Prior	School Board Member Afr American females	1.5 1.1	.639	SIG
Current Prior	School Board Member Afr American males	2.1 2.0	.651	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Hispanic females	.12 .1	.621	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Hispanic males	.07 .06	.388	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member White females	.8 .9	.501	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member White males	1.7 1.9	.742	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member As American females	0 0	99.00099	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member As American males	.03 .01	.700	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Na American females	0 0	99.00099	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Na American males	.01 0	-.010	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Other females	.0094 .0094	-.010	NS
Current Prior	School Board Member Other males	.0094 .0000	99.000099	NS

Afr = African American    As = Asian American    Na = Native American

Respondents were asked to indicate “yes”, “no” or “don’t know” if they were aware of a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in their state that might help individuals get positions as superintendents (Table 4.33). The findings for this question show that 52 respondents (49.1%) indicated they were aware of this type of network. Forty-four (41.5%) of the respondents indicated they didn’t



know, and ten (9.4%) indicated that they were not aware of the “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in their state.

**Table 4.33**

**PERCEIVED GOOD OLD BOY/GIRL NETWORK**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Yes	52	49.1
No	10	9.4
Don't Know	44	41.5
Total	106	100.0

Respondents were asked if they had actively sponsored other African Americans who were aspiring to the position of superintendent (Table 4.34). The finding for this question shows that 73 (68.9%) indicated sponsorship of other African Americans who had aspirations of obtaining the superintendency position and 32 (30.2%) did not.

**Table 4.34**

**SPONSORSHIP OF AFRICAN AMERICANS**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No Response	1	.9
No	32	30.2
Yes	73	68.9
Total	106	100.0

**Additional Findings**

In this chapter, frequency tables and t-test results were used to present the responses given to individual survey questions. In addition to the previously mentioned analyses, a crosstabulation analysis was used to examine the following gender variables: size of school district, degree, marital status, and age. The intent of this analysis was to explore and discuss trends related the to these variables.

A crosstabulation was done to analyze the relationship between gender and the size of school district. The statistical analysis revealed that females were clustered in the cell representing suburban and urban school districts. A significant number of males were clustered in cells representing rural and urban school districts. The results are found in Table 4.35.

**Table 4.35****GENDER FOR SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Gender	Rural	Small Town	Suburban	Urban	Row Total
Male	29	12	13	31	85 80.2%
Female	4	0	8	9	21 19.8%
Column Total	33 31.1%	12 11.3%	21 19.8%	40 37.7%	106 100.0%

Chi- Square  
8.7942

D.F  
3

Significance  
.0322

A crosstabulation was used to analyze the relationship between gender and marital status. A significant number of males were clustered in cells representing rural and urban school districts. It is interesting to note the significant statistical difference in cells representing females marital status. The cells for the females, while predominantly married as were males, revealed more incidence of non-married categories. Results are shown in Table 4.36.

**Table 4.36****RELATIONSHIP OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MARITAL STATUS**

Gender	Single	Div/Sep	Widowed	Married	Row Total
Male	0	7	2	76	85 80.2%
Female	1	6	1	12	20 19.8%
Column Total	1 .9%	13 12.3%	3 2.8%	88 83.0%	105 100.0%

Chi- Square  
12.51275

D.F.  
3

Significance  
.008

A crosstabulation revealed no significant statistical difference between educational level of males and females. The results are shown in Table 4.37.

**Table 4.37****RELATIONSHIP OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGHEST DEGREE AND GENDER**

Gender	Other	BA/BS	MA/MS	M.Ed	Spec	Ed.D	Ph.D	Row Total
Male	1	0	5	11	11	39	18	85 80.2%
Female	0	1	1	1	2	13	3	21 19.8%
Column Total	1 .9%	1 .9%	6 5.7%	12 11.3%	13 12.3%	52 49.1%	21 19.8%	106 100.0%

Chi- Square  
6.7723

D.F.  
6

Significance  
.3424

### **Qualitative Data**

The questionnaire contained one open-ended question that asked participants to briefly write about the perceived racial barriers facing African Americans seeking superintendency positions. Specifically, the purpose of the open-ended question was to elicit the “voices” of African American superintendents regarding racial barriers facing African Americans seeking the superintendency.

This section contains a summary of comments made by 66% of the participants. The responses to item #32 are reported verbatim, with patterns and themes emerging from these responses. Emerging patterns and themes were grouped according to the preponderance of certain words used by respondents in their answers. The respondents “voiced” the following comments regarding their perceptions of barriers facing African American seeking superintendency positions.

## Responses to Question 32

*What are the perceived racial barriers facing African American seeking superintendency positions?*

- **No perceived racial barriers** (5) responses
- **Lack of mobility** (14) responses
- **Networking** (12) responses
- **Boards of Education** (14) responses
- **Preparation and competence** (13) responses
- **Opportunities** (11) responses
- **Stereotypes** (6) responses
- **Discrimination** (8) responses
- **Lack of support** (8) responses
- **Unrealistic Expectation** (5) responses

### No perceived racial barriers

003     The number of black superintendents in Mississippi is growing rapidly. Therefore there are no racial barriers from my perspective. It there is a barrier at all, it is a lack of preparation. It you wish to become a

superintendent, you must be willing to pay your dues starting in the classroom and working your way through the system. It is also important to stay in one school district and not move around.

009 None

083 I am not aware of any perceived racial barriers.

181 None

223 I'm not convinced that there are racial barriers opposing Black-Americans seeking superintendency positions.

### **Lack of Mobility**

014 Limited mobility for African American candidates is a reality because we are still unofficially confined to urban/majority black populated districts.

030 Our options are limited to small rural African American school districts. We have to be male or very fair skinned.

033 Black superintendents are primarily hired only in predominately black school districts.

- 036 African Americans are generally shut out of the superintendency until district is heavily minority with declining test scores, funding, and community support.
- 064 Lack of desire to move (often have strong community ties church, family, etc.)
- 069 Usually we are selected to serve districts with financial problems.
- 075 Mobility/marriage issues;
- 105 African American tend to be limited to school district with a majority African American.
- 107 African American are still largely employed in districts with a high occurrence of proverb and limited financial resources these districts also are among those that perform the lowest on academic tests.
- 118 Urban versus suburban; majority white school boards; majority white community, majority white student population.
- 145 Accessibility to district classified as white is limited. You're are apt to secure a "Black" District than non-Black. Black District are more likely to have poor achievement, financial problems, and a high indigency.



- 170 There is a perception that an African American can only be the  
superintendent of a district that is primary minority.
- 196 African American superintendents seem to always become supt. in school  
districts that are in financial and academic trouble.
- 199 The idea that African Americans can only run a school district after there  
is an economic and educational decline in the school setting. In my area  
black superintendents are hired only after the whites have drained  
everything out, supposedly.

### **Networking**

- 057 African American superintendents are small in number which affects the  
networking or any semblance of the “good ole boy” syndrome, thus  
thwarting opportunity for movement
- 064 Old networks do still exist
- 066 Search firms are not pushing African Americans.
- 075 lack of mentors and advocates;

- 088 The lack of a viable network of African Americans for recruiting and  
advocating for African American candidates to the superintendency  
appears to be a hurdle.
- 089 not part of the Good old Boys Network;
- 105 African American superintendent African American superintendents do  
not have as efficient a safety network to help them obtain a second  
superintendency after having their first as white superintendents do.
- 108 Search process;
- 126 difficult to be part of the good old boys network.
- 147 Networking, knowing where the jobs are.
- 156 Few opportunities to network with sitting superintendents.
- 235 Lack of internal networking and inside knowledge.

### **Boards of Education**

- 029 Imbalance in boards of education: Mostly white males, Racism. A lack of  
diversity on boards of education.

- 044 The limited number of African American accepted for superintendency positions is a clear indication of reservation on the part of controlling Boards of Education.
- 056 Most boards of education are made up of white males who select superintendents like themselves.
- 064 Large percentage of Boards still predominantly white male.
- 066 Majority white Board are not hiring African Americans.
- 073 biased attitudes by certain school boards
- 075 Boards of Education.
- 103 Most Boards appear to be more concerned about how to satisfy the business community and those that do not have children in school. If supt. can satisfy the upper-class parent and power leader and can relate. That in their experience and interview they may have a chance, other wise Board members regardless of color will be very hesitant to hire.
- 105 African American tend to be limited to school district with a majority African American. School boards are still made up primarily of white males. African American superintendent African American superintendents do not have as efficient a safety network to help them

obtain a second superintendency after having their first as white  
superintendents do.

118 majority white school boards

120 A reluctance by some boards and communities to consider elevating a  
minority to the top position. Also, a fear of doing something not  
previously done.

178 Unfortunately boards are usually made up of whites!

180 Board perceive that African American candidates are only appropriate  
when the majority of students in the systems are African American.

214 A lack of strong Board members who are willing to openly provide  
employment opportunities for African Americans.

### **Preparation and Competence**

033 If there is a barrier at all, it is a lack of preparation.

044 Consequently, the perception would be that African Americans lacks  
experience at the various levels. A further perception is that African  
Americans must be overly prepared to perform as Superintendent.

- 057 Many feel that African American superintendents competence is suspect; yet most advanced degrees are awarded from predominantly Caucasian graduate schools.
- 066 Majority white communities are not interested in African Americans supt. regardless of academic prep. Perception African Americans are not equal with the tools address high achieving children.
- 081 There are a lack of qualified interested candidates for central offices positions of the supt.'s position.
- 089 lack of experiences in central office and building level.
- 108 lack of degree (professional);
- 132 Preparedness, opportunity. No matter what other considerations you throw into the equation it all comes back to one and two above.
- 174 Blacks (African Americans) are only effective in all African American or predominately African American systems. Lack of a true since of educational philosophy. Poor budget skills. Will not plan thoroughly for long range planning, budgets, curriculum, facilities, etc. A non-minority population will respond positively to African American leadership, a fear of a backlash from the community. Prevailing fear that the quality of

services will decline. Social prejudice, African Americans will not be a great spokesperson for a majority district. There is fear of poor speaking, writing, and general communication skills. Fear of not making tough decisions in crisis situation. Lack of vision for the district. Will not involve themselves with majority organizations and therefore the district will start to look African American. Note: Many of these issues fall into prevailing stereotypes of how the majority view African American. Keep in mind, when A board employs a superintendent they are employing a person to lead the district. An African American credential often times get buried in the prevailing stereotypes situations.

- 175 Being prepared to deal with perceptions that other's have of you.  
Prepared educationally with the knowledge to run a good school, look for new and better ways to improve student achievement.
- 179 Excet Exam
- 217 Perceived lack of competence by white and African American board members.
- 231 Preparation and experience.

### **Opportunity**

- 014 Predominantly Caucasian districts do not actively seek qualified minority candidates to fill vacancies, and minorities are not seriously considered.
- 028 Not given opportunity to select, but accountable for team failure.
- 071 The major barrier is that most predominately white districts do not consider hiring non-white superintendents.
- 075 opportunities to serve as an assistant superintendent of deputy superintendent (white males go easily from high school principalship, but women and African American must touch all bases to be considered seriously for superintendent positions);
- 108 lack of being selected
- 153 Opportunity
- 156 Few opportunities to network with sitting superintendents. No direct link to information regarding vacancies. Few opportunities to join “good old boy” network.
- 176 Opportunities are very limited especially where the board majority is non-African American of student body is not majority African American.

- 180 There are too few opportunities for African American educators to assume  
high level positions in educational organizations where they can develop  
the experiences required for effective performance in the superintendency.
- 221 Opportunity to work in suburban areas.
- 235 Very few opportunities in small communities...usually not as diverse.

### **Stereotypes**

- 006 The notion that African Americans can only manage urban school districts  
successfully.
- 028 The color of our skin, the lack of opportunities to gain experience, The  
feeling that we can't handle it. We are not often given the chance, because  
of attitudes held by others. This attitude is helped by many, many whites  
and too many Blacks.
- 056 African Americans aren't capable of being CEO's. White males make  
strong leaders.
- 073 inability to handle politics and finances (budget).
- 086 There are barriers facing African American superintendents in the realm of  
control of media tends to concentrate on publishing negative image news



and creating images for the public or magnify ills of urban areas. Also in trying to create a legitimate network to...other superintendents, it is normally artificial and frequent interactions don't occur on a local level. Frequency of contact and supportive information is crucial in the initial steps of creating leadership strength and imagery.

168 That Blacks can't be or make good CEO's. That we can't handle people or money...

### **Discrimination**

028 The color of our skin.

029 Racism

030 We have to be male or very fair skinned.

059 It has been my experience that most barriers are "gender" related rather racial.

093 By the fact that you are African American the playing field is not level.

096 All of the barriers that I Have faced have been racial or political.

108 just plain old racism.

- 152 Pervasive racism that says we will not be led by blacks no matter how competent.
- 222 Racism still plays a major factor in Board selection. Race is not a prohibiting factor. More Afro- Americans superintendent must dare to lead majority districts.

### **Lack of Support**

- 022 Lack of respect for African American candidates with the same credentials as those of other ethnic background. Responsibility and accountability with limited or no real authority.
- 064 Lack of support from colleagues.
- 065 Lack of support base. Majority school boards usually do not support African American superintendents.
- 069 We are often given little support or inadequate support to achieve objectives.
- 073 Lack of support from people in position power and influence.
- 139 The number one problem which African Americans face is the perception that they will not be well perceived by a majority white population . This

barrier prohibits many excellent and highly capable persons from securing good positions.

151 As a African American superintendent I am constantly “second guessed” about decision that have been well thoughtout. The media is much quicker to exploit any situation in our district and analyze happenings more closely.

199 Then there is the general feeling of the community and staff that you will fail, so you watched a lot closer that a white superintendent.

### **Unrealistic Expectations**

030 We are willing to work for less.

069 Usually we are selected to serve districts with financial problems. Often we are expected to obtain miracles. We are often given little support or inadequate support to achieve objectives. Minorities often feel we can overcome years of inequities to serve their personal needs. We have to guard against having unrealistic expectations of ourselves. Being superhuman!!

- 082 Unrealistic expectation on the part of African American community  
coupled with a lack of support on the part-when the “Tire meets the  
road.”
- 199 The idea that African Americans can only run a school district after there  
is an economic and educational decline in the school setting. In my area  
black superintendents are hired only after the whites have drained  
everything out, supposedly. Then there is the general feeling of the  
community and staff that you will fail, so you watched a lot closer that a  
white superintendent.
- 191 One becomes a messiah or scapegoat.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to present a descriptive analysis of data relevant to the career paths, career patterns, and selected school district characteristics of African American superintendents. Data related to those variables and related to the research questions were presented in tabular and narrative form.

- Based on the data analysis presented in this chapter, the following observations and findings were made regarding African American superintendents:
- A majority of the respondents (58%) were graduates of historically Black colleges and universities.
- A majority of all superintendents (88%) were married.
- The respondents were highly educated; 69% held doctorate degree.
- A majority of the respondents earned \$60,000 or more annually.
- Classroom experience for the respondents averaged 7.1 years.
- A higher percentage of respondents (70.8%) were employed as secondary classroom teachers than were employed as elementary teachers (40.6%).
- At the building level, 53% of the respondents served as secondary principals; and 39% of the respondents served as elementary principals.
- A majority of the respondents served in instructional supervisory positions.
- The data revealed that 52% of the respondents served as assistant superintendents prior to their superintendency.
- The career paths groups the respondents were most associated with were the traditional intermediate route (Career Path Group B) 40%. For this path

group (Traditional, Intermediate Route) the respondents had experience as a teacher, building level administrator, plus one other non-teaching position prior to the superintendency. The traditional short route 28% (Career Path Group A), the respondents had experience as a teacher and building level administration, but no experience at the central office level. The traditional long route (Career Path C) which respondents had experience as a teacher, building Administrator, plus two or more non-teaching position prior to the superintendency accounted for 30% of the respondents.

- Career Path C was mostly associated with urban school districts.
- The younger respondents were associated mostly with Career Paths A and B.
- The elder respondents were associated mainly with Career Paths B and C.
- The majority of males were associated with Career Path B (Traditional Intermediate Route).
- The majority of females were associated with Career Path C (Traditional Long Route).
- A majority of the respondents served in three or more positions prior to the superintendency.

- A majority of the respondents served 22 years or more prior to obtaining a superintendency.
- A majority of the superintendents assumed their first superintendency between the ages of 40-49.
- The study revealed that 53% of the respondents used the local school board for their current superintendency search.
- The majority of the respondents served in either an urban (38%) school district or in a rural (31%) school district. The remainder served in small and/or suburban school districts.
- A majority (56%) of the respondents followed White superintendents in their current superintendency.
- The study revealed that 69% of the respondents actively sponsored African Americans who had aspirations of obtaining the position of superintendency.
- Data indicated a significant statistical difference in the relationship between current and prior operating expenses per-pupil.
- A significant statistical difference was noted in the relationship between current and prior African American student population. There was an increase in African American student enrollment.

- There was a significant statistical difference between the relationship between current and prior African American and White teachers with decline in the number of White teachers and increases in the number of African American teachers.
- There was a significant statistical difference in the current and prior number of Whites members in the community.
- There was a significant statistical difference in the relationship between the current and prior African American number of female school board membership.
- The data revealed a significant statistical difference between the marital status of male and female African American superintendents. Males tended to be married to a greater extent than females.
- Female respondents tended to be located in suburban and urban school districts than male respondents. Males tended to be located in rural and urban school districts.



## **Chapter V**

### **Summary of Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

#### **Overview**

Public school superintendents have one of the most challenging, demanding, and visible positions in American society. They provide educational leadership in approximately 15,499 school districts across the United States. Their visibility is marked by the fact that the majority of leadership positions are held by non-minority individuals (American Association of School Administrators, 1992). The underrepresentation of minorities in public school leadership positions on a national level has been thoroughly documented over the years, and the limited representation of African Americans in top positions of public school administration is glaring (AASA, 1992, 1983; Jones & Montenegro, 1988, 1985; Montenegro, 1993).

It is clearly obvious that a diverse representation is needed in a pluralistic society such as the one in which we live, but perhaps more important is the need to use our human resources to develop the talents of all those who can make valuable contributions for the greater good of all. It is critically important for children to see that African American superintendents exist and that people of

color can assume leadership positions. African American superintendents are needed by the community to serve not just as role models but as educational leaders who can provide the foremost learning environments to fulfill the hopes and expectations of our nation's youth.

### Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to: (1) examine and describe the career path and career pattern experiences of African Americans who have attained superintendency positions in public schools; (2) examine the extent of selected characteristics found in the school districts prior to and during their appointment as superintendent; and (3) examine the perceived racial barriers facing African American superintendents. This study focuses on African American superintendents in the United States. During the 1995-96 school year, there were a total of 223 identified African American superintendents leading public school districts in the United States, as shown by a survey conducted by Charles Moody Sr. (1996).

This study was expected to magnify and expand the knowledge base about current African American superintendents. In the review of literature, there was a

dearth of information about current African American superintendents' experiences and perspectives.

### **Methodology**

The design of this study used a descriptive survey approach to examine the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents in the United States. An additional focus examined the extent of selected characteristics of their school districts prior to and during the tenure.

The use of survey methodology involving a questionnaire provided the researcher with a method of data collection that was efficient and systematic. It also allowed the study to include the entire population of African American superintendents in the United States.

The questionnaire was developed, pilot-tested, revised, and mailed to all 202 superintendents in the population. The questionnaire consisted of four sections with a total of 32 questions: (1) biographical data on each superintendent was collected; (2) selected career paths and career patterns of each superintendent, (3) details regarding the selected characteristics of each superintendent's school district and school board members and; (4) prior and current demographics of the

school district. The final section contained a question that requested each superintendent to reflect on their perceived racial barriers faced by African American seeking the position of superintendent.

The data solicited was quantifiable and could be expressed in numerical values to facilitate data interpretation. The responses to the survey items were analyzed using computations of frequencies, means, and correlation coefficients. Additionally, one narrative response survey item was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis procedures.

Three limitations of the study were noted. One limitation of the study was dependent on the willingness of the respondents to share personal and factual information. The researcher could not address respondents who did not provide responses to certain questions. The non responses had minimal effort on the statistical analysis of the study. However, an over riding limitation of the study was the limited responses of 52% of the total African American superintendent population. A second limitation was in documenting the rich description of the responses, researcher bias may have occurred in the processing of information and drawing conclusions. Finally, this study was limited by the fluctuation of the employment of the participants during the 1996-97 school year.

The intent of this study was to describe the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents and the extent of selected characteristics of school districts prior to and during the tenure of the superintendents.

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **Research Question #1**

What were the career path and career pattern experiences of African American superintendents that led to their ascension to the position of superintendent?

Findings of the study for this research question include:

#### Career paths

The present study identified 78 individual career paths leading to the superintendency (See Appendix E). The 78 individual career paths were grouped using Burnham's (1989) superpath model. Path Group B (40%) was the most commonly used path followed by Path Group C (30%), Path Group A (28%) and, Path Group D (2%).

In Path Group A (Traditional, Short Route), the respondents had experience as a teacher and building level administration, but no experience at the

central office level. In Burnham's study, this path group was ranked second in terms of frequency. For the present study this path group was ranked third.

The respondents in the path group had 3 positions changes within 22 years prior to reaching the superintendency. This path group was dominated by the respondent in rural school districts.

For Path Group B (Traditional, Intermediate Route), the respondents had experience as a teacher, building level administrator, plus one other supervisory position prior to the superintendency. This path group for the present study ranked first in term of most frequent path. In Burnham's study, this path group ranked first in terms of frequency as well.

The respondents in this path group had 4 position changes with 22 years prior to becoming superintendent. This path group was equally distributed in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in the study.

In Path Group C (Traditional, Long Route), the respondents had experience as a teacher and building level administrator, along with one or more high-level central office positions. This career path in the present study was the second most traveled prior to the superintendency. In Burnham's study, this path was the third most traveled path prior to the superintendency.

Respondents in the path group had 6 position changes within 24 years prior to reaching the superintendency. These path group respondents were found mainly in urban school districts.

Path Group D (Non-Traditional, Short Route) was a unique career path. Respondents in this career path group moved from teacher to a high-level central position prior to the superintendency. For the present study, this career path was the least traveled path by the respondents. This result was also consistent with Burnham's study.

This unique career path group respondents had .5 position changes within 1 year of service. Respondents in this path group appeared to come from outside of public school systems prior to becoming superintendents. This group path group was found only in urban school districts.

Additional career path data revealed that male respondents were found mostly in Path Group B followed Path A and C. Female respondents were found mostly in Path Group C followed by Path Groups B and A. It appears from these findings that males respondents were appointed to superintendent positions at a faster rate than female respondents. This assumption is supported by the fact that for age and career path of respondents, males tended to dominate the

expeditious routes to the superintendency. And female respondents tended to be clustered in the more deliberate routes to the superintendency.

### Career Patterns

The superintendents who participated in this study were primarily male (80.2%) between the age of 42 and 70. Females accounted for 19.8% of the study participants. The average age of all superintendents in the present study was 53 years of age. In the AASA (1992) study, the average age of its superintendents was 49.4 years. This study indicates that African American superintendents are somewhat older than the general superintendent population.

In the present study, the majority of respondents were married. This finding is consistent with data from AASA, which reported that a majority of their respondents were married. The data also revealed that African American male superintendents were married in more frequency than African American female superintendents. For the AASA study, this variable was not present.

The present study revealed that African American superintendents were highly educated. The percentage of African Americans holding doctoral degrees was 69%. The finding from the present study is higher than AASA respondents



for highest degree held. AASA reported that 36% of respondents held doctoral degrees.

Respondents in the present study were more likely to have been graduates of historically Black colleges and universities. This finding is not surprising to the researcher given the average age of the respondents in this study. A majority of the respondents were of college age during the era of “separate but equal”. Until 1954 and the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which ended “separate but equal” school systems, historically Black college and universities were mostly the option for the majority of the respondents trying to get a college education.

Most superintendents are well-paid professionals. The salary range of all respondents in the present study was between \$40,000 and \$129,000 per year. The most frequent range of salaries was between \$100,000 and \$110,000. The present study is also reflective of the rise in superintendents’ salaries as reported by AASA (1992).

The African American superintendent is most typically a former secondary teacher. A higher percentage of African American superintendents had been employed as secondary teachers (70%) than elementary teachers (40.6%).

AASA (1992) study found that 69.8% were secondary teachers, and only 28.5% of its superintendents were elementary teachers. The findings from this study reinforces the reality that the superintendency is dominated by professionals who get their start as secondary teachers. However, they are more likely to have been an elementary teacher than the general population of superintendents.

Respondents in the present study had classroom experience ranging from 1-21 years. The average classroom experience of the respondents was seven years. Data revealed that this was two years more than superintendents in the AASA study, who on the average spent three to five years as classroom teachers before being administrators. This finding indicates that there is comparable choice by African American superintendents and the general population of superintendents to make early career choices when aspiring to administrative positions.

Respondents in the present study had a prominent level of experience in instructional supervisory positions prior to becoming superintendent. Specifically, at the positions of supervisor, director, and coordinator. This finding appears to indicate that the respondents had a high level of instructional

supervisory experience and skill that is necessary to positively impact student performance.

The present study supports the findings that local school boards of education managed most superintendency search processes. In the AASA study, the local school board managed the search process for the respondents' current superintendency 62.4% of the time. The present study data indicates that the local school board managed the search process for the respondents' current superintendency 53% of the time, followed by a professional search firm 26.4% and state boards of education 19%. Although studies have shown that minorities are more likely to be hired by professional search firms that managed the search process, this was not evident in this study. A noteworthy finding is that the state boards of education managed the search process for some of the African American superintendents. This may be due in part to some states assuming monitoring status or control over the hiring process of some local school districts such as is found in New Jersey and Mississippi.

Respondents in present study served in rural school districts 31% of the time and urban school districts 37% of the time. However, the data revealed that female African American superintendents are likely to be found in urban school

districts, and male African American superintendents are likely to be found in rural and urban school districts. In the AASA study, female superintendents were more likely to found in smaller districts. In the present study, however, females were found in the larger urban districts. It is interesting to note that the data for the present study indicate that few African American superintendents are found in suburban school districts.

The present study indicates that African American superintendents are likely to follow a White superintendent. There are several possible explanations for this finding. One reason could be that the ethnic composition of a school population has changed, which may have warranted a change in the representation in the local control of the school district. This change of local control can also include the local school board, which has the responsibility of hiring the superintendent. This reason is supported by Scott (1980) and Jones (1985) who reported that the increase in African American superintendents was due, in part, to school districts with high percentages of minority students and educational problems accrued from years of neglect and deprivation.

The present study supports the findings of the AASA study in which a majority of superintendents are mentors to other aspiring superintendents.

AASA (1992) suggest that the presence of mentors is of great importance of any profession. The respondents in the present study (69%) were more likely to sponsor other African Americans who had aspirations of obtaining the superintendency position. To underscore the importance of mentorship, Moody (1984) notes

That traditionally attainment of a school superintendency has depended to an appreciable extent on the help and information an aspirant received from professional contacts.

Additionally, Holliman (1996) in her study of superintendents suggested that mentorship provides access to information and guidance that is crucial to upward mobility.

The present study supports the assumption of the existence of a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in states that help individuals get positions as superintendents. This finding is consistent with the AASA study that found the same assumption present. Their study found that 57% of superintendents supported the assumption of the existence of a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network. The present study indicated 49.1% agreed with the assumption. It is noteworthy that the present study revealed 41.5% of respondents did not know this network

existed in their state. One reason for this perceived assumption may be attributed to their comfort level, denial or reality of the total “big picture,” or the underrepresentation of African American superintendents.

### Research Question #2

2. What was the nature of selected characteristics of the school district prior to and during their tenure as superintendent?

The present study revealed an increase in the per-pupil operating expense and student enrollment during the tenure of African American superintendents. Given that a significant number of African American superintendents are employed in urban districts that may have an eroding tax base, this finding may indicate that supporting instructional programs may be problematic for the rising student enrollment. This finding also supports Moody’s (1971) contention that African American superintendents are more likely to inherit districts with precarious financial conditions and rising enrollments.

The data from the present study indicated that the student composition of African American-run school districts was 64% African American, 7% Hispanic,

23% White, 2% Asian American, and 4% Native American and Other. This finding is similar to compositions found by Jones (1985), Scott (1980), and Moody (1971). Given the data from the present study and earlier related studies, the composition of a school district should not limit the upward mobility of any aspiring superintendents.

The present study supports the findings in Moody's (1971) study that African American run school districts have a decrease in the number of White teachers and an increase in the number of African American teachers. The present data revealed that the composition of their school districts was 49% White teachers, down from 52%. The number of African American teachers was 41%, up from 38%. There was a scarcity of other minority teachers in African American superintendents school districts.

The local school board composition in the present study was characterized by the high presence of both male and female African American representation. This finding is also supportive of earlier studies on the characteristics of African American school districts. A significant finding in this study was that prior and current representation of African American females on local boards of education

represented a significant increase. The study also revealed a decrease in the representation of White males and females.

The present study also supported previous studies that suggest that “White flight” had occurred in urban school districts. It is interesting to point out that African American superintendents in rural districts were located in “pocket” areas in the deep South. These “pocket” areas usually have a high concentration of African Americans. The current composition of the communities that had African superintendents from the present study was African American 47%, White 36%, Hispanic 6%, Asian American 1%, Native American .2%, and Other 1%.

### Research Question #3

#### 3. What are the racial barriers perceived by those seeking the position of superintendent?

In the present study, the respondents were asked to indicate the perceived racial barriers facing African American superintendents. Of the survey population, 66% responded to the question. Responses fell into 10 themes or patterns. They were as follows: (1) no perceived racial barriers; (2) lack of mobility;



(3) networking; (4) boards of education; (5) preparation and competence; (6) opportunities; (7) stereotypes; (8) discrimination; (9) lack of support; and (10) unrealistic expectations.

Very few of the respondents indicated that they perceived no racial barriers facing African Americans seeking superintendency positions. As the researcher alluded to earlier, a possible explanation for this response could be attributed to their comfort level, denial of reality of the total “big picture”.

The most often cited barriers were lack of mobility and boards of education. For lack of mobility, the present study indicated that African American superintendents perceived that they are limited to and confined to urban and majority African American populated school districts. However, some perceived that mobility was limited to small rural African American populated school districts. Also, some of the African American superintendents perceived that the only types of districts that seemed to be available were districts with financial and academic trouble. This finding is consistent with Moody (1971), Scott (1980), and Jones (1985) who reported that African American superintendents held positions in school districts with a high percentage of minorities and dwindling financial resources.

The local board of education was cited with the same frequency as the above perceived barrier. The African American superintendents mentioned perceived biased attitudes by certain school boards. Also cited was the imbalance in composition of most boards of education, favoring White males. This perceived assumption was further heightened by the fact that the majority White boards of education select superintendents like themselves. Some of respondents perceived that the limited number of African Americans accepted for superintendency positions was a clear indication of reservation on the part of the controlling board.

The respondents also felt strongly about preparation and competence as a racial barrier facing African Americans seeking the superintendency. They perceived that there is a perception on the part of non-African Americans that African Americans lack experience at certain levels, their competence is suspect, and that African Americans do not possess the proper skills needed to make the tough decision in crisis situations. Many feel that regardless of academic preparation and competence, the decisions that are made will always be perceived as incompetent.

Another perceived barrier by the respondents was opportunity. Respondents cited opportunities as being very limited, especially when the

majority is non-African American. They also mentioned the lack of opportunities to work in suburban areas.

Networking was another commonly perceived racial barrier. The superintendents felt that the lack of viable networks of African American superintendents for recruiting and advocating candidates to the superintendency appears to be a hurdle. Additionally, they felt that African American superintendents are small in number, which affects the networking--thus thwarting opportunities for movement.

Discrimination and lack of support received the same frequency of responses. For discrimination, the respondents perceived that African Americans are not on the same “playing field” or that the “playing field is not level.” Some perceived that discrimination still plays a major factor in the selection superintendents by the local school board. A noteworthy perception was that discrimination barriers favored being “fair skinned” and male. The “fair skinned” perception is a noted sociological construct of the African American community. Gender issues were noted in Holliman’s (1996) study as a barrier facing female superintendents. Her study noted that being a female was seen a handicap and not as a strength.

Lack of support was considered a barrier faced by African Americans seeking the superintendency. Many of the respondents perceived a lack of a support base, lack of support from colleagues, and inadequate support from the local school board to achieve school district objectives.

Respondents voiced the perception that African American superintendents face unrealistic expectations in seeking the superintendency. Such expectations include that one either becomes a “messiah” or “scapegoat” for school districts that are in a economic and educational decline status.

## **Conclusions**

The findings from this study clearly identified several important characteristics of the career paths and career patterns of African American superintendents. This study developed out of the researcher's personal and professional interest about the position of superintendent and the factors and conditions that influence there careers. Because of the need to attract, train, and employ qualified candidates for the superintendent's role, it was critical to gather information about factors that impact there careers. The following are conclusions derived from this sample of African American superintendents in this study:

1. A majority of African American superintendents are married. Eighty-three percent of respondents in the present study were married.
2. African American superintendents are highly educated professionals. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents in the present study held doctoral degrees.
3. A majority of African American superintendents began their professional careers as secondary classroom teachers. A higher

percentage of respondents (71%) were employed as secondary teachers at the beginning of their careers.

4. A majority of African American superintendents had experiences as instructional supervisors. Fifty percent of respondents had experiences as instructional supervisors during their careers.
5. The career path most frequented by African Americans toward the superintendency was the traditional intermediate route (Path Group B), which included positions of secondary teacher, assistant principal or principal, and one other non-teaching position.
6. The Traditional Short Route (Path Group A) was mostly associated with rural school districts. A majority of the respondents from rural districts was in this path group.
7. The Traditional Immediate Route (Path Group B) was associated mostly with urban, suburban, and rural school districts with African American superintendents in rural school districts. Path Group B was equally distributed among these district types.

8. The Traditional Long Route (Path Group C) was mainly found with urban school districts. A majority of the respondents from urban school districts were in this path group.
9. African American superintendents tended to hold 3-6 positions prior to obtaining a superintendency. These positions were associated with the individual's career path.
10. African American superintendents tended to be a “seasoned veteran” with 22-24 years of experience prior to becoming superintendent. This range of experience included positions such as teacher, building-level administrator, and central office positions.
11. Local school boards usually conduct the search process for African American superintendents. Fifty-three percent of the respondents indicated this was the process used for their current job.
12. The majority of African American superintendents are employed in rural and urban school districts. Thirty-one percent of the respondents were employed in rural school districts and thirty-eight percent were employed in urban school districts.

13. African American female superintendents are employed more frequently in suburban and urban school districts. Thirty-eight percent of female respondents were employed in suburban school districts and forty-three percent were employed in urban school districts.
14. A majority of African American superintendents actively mentor other African Americans who aspire to the superintendency. Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated they mentored other African Americans who had aspirations of obtaining the superintendency position.
15. Respondents in the study indicated the following: there was a significant decrease in the White student population community and a significant increase in the African American student population during the African American tenure as superintendent.
16. The present study indicated there was a significant increase in the number of African American school board members during the tenure of African American superintendents.



### **Recommendations for Policy and Practical Usage**

These recommendations are based on the findings of this present study. The recommendations are not intended to be all inclusive or exhaustive; they are suggestive in nature for potential practical use and future education employment policy.

First, specialized training programs should be available to local school board members to make them sensitive to possible discriminatory practices in their screening, hiring, and evaluating potential applicants for the position of superintendent.

Second, current research data on the status of African American superintendents should be provided to local school boards to assure them that African American superintendents have a proven track record of preparation and performance.

Third, departments of educational administration should be leaders in facilitating mentoring and sponsoring networks among African American superintendents. This practice could include curricula with a focus on developing networking skills. It is critical that worthwhile networks exist for upward mobility.

Fourth, departments of educational administration should provide superintendency programs that are experience based instead of theory based. These programs need to provide the “big picture” which includes all members of society and not just a select segment.

Fifth, aspiring African American school superintendents should form support networks with current and retired superintendents, regardless of color.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The findings and implications from this study give rise to recommendations based on the findings of this present study. The recommendations are not intended to be all inclusive or exhaustive but suggestive in nature for potential further study.

1. In a continuation of Moody’s (1971) request, a study should be conducted each ten years on the status of the African American administrated school districts.
2. This study could be enhanced by a companion Asian Americans or Hispanic superintendent qualitative research study emphasizing career paths.

3. Further research is needed from a theoretical perspective about the career path and selection process of prospective minority superintendent.
4. Further research is needed to explore the various barriers that minorities may face moving from building level administrator to central office administrator.
5. Strategies need to be explored about how the inclusion of all superintendents in formal and networks can be improved.

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**COVER LETTER (UT STATIONERY)**

February 14, 1997

TO THE SUPERINTENDENT ADDRESSED:

As one of the African American superintendents in the nation, you have been selected to participate in a current research study entitled "A Study of the Career Paths and Patterns of African American Superintendents from 1970-1997". Your name was selected from a national data base. The American Association of School Administrators and the University of Texas at Austin have been collaborating on a series of studies to determine the characteristics of exemplary superintendents. The results have contributed not only to the development of preparation programs for the position of superintendent but also for professional development of school executives.

I am an African American doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration, Cooperative Superintendency Program at the University of Texas at Austin. My area of specialization is the superintendency and cultural diversity. This research study is an elaboration on the work of Charles Moody founding member of the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

To date, few research studies have been conducted regarding the career paths, career patterns, and barriers Africans Americans face as they aspire to the superintendency. The study I am conducting will provide valuable feedback for aspiring superintendents, professors in educational administration leadership programs, school board members, search firm consultants, and other educators.

Information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. The ID number on your survey is for analysis purposes only. Completing and returning the survey will be taken as evidence of your willingness to participate in this study, thereby giving your consent to have the information used for the purposes of this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or the completion of the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me at (512) 475-3681. You may also contact Nolan Estes or Ben M. Harris, my dissertation co-chairs, at the University of Texas at Austin (512) 471-7551. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Your response by March 14, 1997, will be appreciated and will contribute greatly to this research project.

Sincerely,

Howard K. Dunlop  
Doctoral Candidate

Enclosure

**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

Participant No. \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### Career Paths and Patterns of African American Superintendents

Place a check (✓) in the appropriate space(s) or write an individual response in the space provided. Additional personal comments are encouraged and will enrich this study. Respond to every numbered item as best you can.

#### SECTION I: Career Paths and Patterns Leading to the Superintendency

1. In how many different school districts have you been employed throughout your career in education? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years of service did you have as a classroom teacher prior to entering administration or supervision? \_\_\_\_\_
3. In how many school districts have you served as district superintendent? \_\_\_\_\_
4. At what age did you assume your first superintendency? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many years have you served in your current superintendency position?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What group/individuals managed the search process for your current superintendency?

- \_\_\_ Professional Search Firm
- \_\_\_ State School Board Association
- \_\_\_ State Educational Administrators Association



\_\_\_ Local School Board

\_\_\_ Other: Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Place a check (✓) in each box to designate the sequence of the positions in which you have served. Leave blank all positions that are not a part of your career path. For each position indicate years of service.

### Career Path Sequence of Assignments

Position Title	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Length of Experience
Teacher Aide															
Teacher Elementary															
Teacher Secondary															
Counselor															
Supervisor															
Asst. Principal Elementary															
Asst. Principal Secondary															
Principal Elementary															
Principal Secondary															
Director/ Coordinator															
High Level/ Central Office															
Asst. Superintendent															
Superintendent															
Other															

8. Is there a “Good Old Boy/Girl” network in your state that help individuals get positions as superintendents? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Don’t know \_\_\_
9. Have you actively sponsored other African Americans who aspire to the superintendency? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

## SECTION II: Characteristics of Your School District

In this section, please describe your **current** school district's characteristics and the characteristics **prior** to your appointment as the district's superintendent.

10. How would you describe your school district?

Urban \_\_\_ Suburban \_\_\_ Small Town \_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_

11. How many schools are in your district? \_\_\_\_\_

12. How many schools did your school district have **prior** to your appointment as superintendent? \_\_\_\_\_

13. When you were hired as superintendent of your present district, was your predecessor:

### MALE

\_\_\_ African American  
\_\_\_ Asian American  
\_\_\_ Hispanic  
\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_ White  
\_\_\_ Other

### FEMALE

\_\_\_ African American  
\_\_\_ Asian American  
\_\_\_ Hispanic  
\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_ White  
\_\_\_ Other

14. What is the **current** operating expense per pupil in your district? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

15. What was the operating expense per pupil in your district **prior** to your appointment as superintendent? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

16. What is the **current** student enrollment in your district? \_\_\_\_\_

17. What was the school district's student enrollment **prior** to your appointment? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Identify the **current** ethnic population of the students in your district:

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ Other

19. Identify the ethnic population of students **prior** to your appointment as superintendent:

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ Other

20. Please identify the number of the **current** gender and racial/ethnic identity of your school district's board members.

**MALES**

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_ Other

**FEMALES**

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_ Other

21. Please identify the number of the gender and racial/ethnic identity of your school district's board members **prior** to your appointment as superintendent:

**MALES**

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_ Other

**FEMALES**

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_ Other

22. What is the **current** racial/ethnic identity of teachers in your school district?

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Other

23. What was the racial/ethnic identity of teachers in your school district **prior** to your appointment as superintendent?

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Other

24. Identify the **current** racial/ethnic population of the community you serve.

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Other

25. Identify the racial/ ethnic population of the community **prior** to your appointment as superintendent.

% \_\_\_\_ African American

% \_\_\_\_ Asian American

% \_\_\_\_ Hispanic

% \_\_\_\_ Native American

% \_\_\_\_ White

% \_\_\_\_ Other

### **SECTION III: Biographical Data**

**Please check one (✓)**

26. Gender: Male \_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

27 Place of Birth: City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

28 Marital Status:    Single \_\_\_\_\_                      Married \_\_\_\_\_  
                                 Divorced/Separated \_\_\_\_\_                      Widowed \_\_\_\_\_

29. Your highest earned educational degree:

B.A./B.S. \_\_\_\_ M.A./M.S. \_\_\_\_ M.Ed. \_\_\_\_ Specialist \_\_\_\_  
Ed.D. \_\_\_\_ Ph.D. \_\_\_\_ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_

30. Did you graduate from a historically Black college or university?

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ If yes: Undergraduate \_\_\_\_ Graduate \_\_\_\_

31. The salary range which reflects your current compensation package:

\$40,000-\$49,000 \_\_\_\_ \$50,000-\$59,000 \_\_\_\_  
\$60,000-\$69,000 \_\_\_\_ \$70,000-\$79,000 \_\_\_\_  
\$80,000-\$89,000 \_\_\_\_ \$90,000-\$99,000 \_\_\_\_  
\$100,000-\$110,000 \_\_\_\_ \$110,000-\$120,000 \_\_\_\_  
More than \$120,000 \_\_\_\_

#### **SECTION IV: Personal Reflections**

**(Please feel free to continue your response on the reverse side)**

32. What are the perceived racial barriers facing African Americans seeking  
superintendency  
positions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. Please feel free to attach  
additional comments on as many pages as necessary if you wish to elaborate on any  
of the questions. Please return the completed survey in the envelope provided and  
mail to:

**Howard K. Dunlop  
Department of Educational Administration  
George I. Sanchez Building (SZB) 310  
University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX. 78712-1291**

**APPENDIX C**  
**REMINDER POST CARD**



Dear Superintendent:

In February you received a copy of a questionnaire "Career Paths And Patterns of African American Superintendents from 1970-1997". Although the response I have received to date has been excellent, my records indicate that I have not received a reply from you. Your response is critical to the success of this research study regarding African American superintendents. I hope that I can count on your participation. Please send in your survey by March 14. You may also fax your response to (512) 463-9055. Thank you in advance.

Howard K. Dunlop  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Texas at Austin

**APPENDIX D**  
**HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

## **HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

### **Alabama**

Alabama A & M University  
Alabama State University  
Miles College  
Oakwood College  
Stillman College  
Talladega College  
Tuskegee University

### **Arkansas**

Arkansas Baptist College  
Shorter College  
Philander Smith College  
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

### **Delaware**

Delaware State University

### **District of Columbia**

Howard University  
University of D.C.

### **Florida**

Bethune-Cookman College  
Edward Waters College  
Florida A & M University  
Florida Memorial College

### **Georgia**

Albany State University  
Clark Atlanta University  
Paine College  
Savannah State University

Spellman College  
Fort Valley State University  
Morehouse College  
Morris Brown College

**Kentucky**

Kentucky State University

**Louisiana**

Dillard University  
Southern University  
Grambling State University  
Xavier University

**Maryland**

Bowie State University  
Coppin State College  
Morgan State University  
University of Maryland , Princess Anne

**Mississippi**

Alcorn State University  
Jackson State University  
Mississippi Valley State University  
Rust College  
Tougaloo College

**Missouri**

Harris-Stowe State College  
Lincoln University

**North Carolina**

Barber-Scotia College  
Bennett College  
Elizabeth City State University  
Fayetteville State University

Johnson C. Smith University  
Livingstone College  
North Carolina A & T State University  
North Carolina Central University  
Saint Augustine College  
Shaw University  
Winston-Salem State University

**Ohio**

Central State University  
Wilberforce University

**Oklahoma**

Langston University

**Pennsylvania**

Cheney State University  
Lincoln University

**South Carolina**

Allen University  
Benedict College  
Claflin College  
Morris College  
South Carolina State University

**Tennessee**

Fisk University  
Knoxville College  
Lane College  
LeMoyne-Owen College  
Meharry Medical College  
Tennessee State University

**Texas**

Huston-Tillotson College  
Jarvis Christian College  
Paul Quinn College  
Prairie View A & M University  
Texas College  
Texas Southern University  
Wiley College

**Virginia**

Hampton University  
Norfolk State University  
Saint Paul College  
Virginia State University  
Virginia Union University

**West Virginia**

West Virginia State College

**APPENDIX E**  
**INDIVIDUAL CAREER PATHS**

## INDIVIDUAL CAREER PATHS

### Symbols for Sequence of Positions

**TA** = Teacher's Aide **ET** Elementary Teacher **ST** = Secondary Teacher  
**C** = Counselor **SV** = Supervisor **AEP** = Ass't. Elementary Principal  
**ASP** = Ass't. Secondary Principal **EP** = Elementary Principal **SP** = Secondary Principal  
**D/C** = Director/Coordinator **HL/CO** = High Level Central Office  
**AS** = Ass't. Superintendent **Su** = Superintendent

### Path Group A (16 Different Career Paths)

TA → ET → ST → ASP → EP → **Su**

ET → EP → **Su**

ET → AEP → EP → **Su**

ET → ST → ASP → SP → **Su** ( 2)

ET → ST → EP → SP → **Su** (2)

ET → ST → EP → **Su**

ET → ST → AEP → **Su**

ET → AEP → EP → **Su** (2)

ET → C → ASP → SP → **Su**

ST → C → EP → **Su**

ST → C → SV → EP → **Su**

ST → SV → EP → SP → **Su**

ST → ASP → SP → **Su** (4)

ST → ASP → **Su**

ST → ASP → EP → SP → **Su**

ST → ASP → SP → **Su** (4)

ST → SP → **Su** (5)



**Path Group B** (28 Different Career Paths)

TA → ET → ST → SV → ASP → D/C → **Su**

ET → ST → C → ASP → AS → **Su**

ET → ST → C → EP → SP → AS → **Su**

ET → ASP → EP → HL/CO → **Su**

ET → ASP → EP → AS → **Su**

ET → ASP → AEP → SP → AS → **Su**

ET → ASP → EP → AS → **Su**

ET → ASP → SP → AS → **Su**

ET → EP → D/C → **Su**

ET → EP → AS → **Su** (4)

ET → C → SV → AEP → EP → SP → **Su**

ET → C → SV → ASP → EP → HL/CO → **Su**

ET → C → AEP → SP → AS → **Su**

ET → C → EP → D/C → AS → **Su**

ET → C → EP → AS → **Su**

ET → D/C → AS → **Su**

ST → C → SV → ASP → SP → AS → **Su**

ST → C → SV → EP → AS → **Su**

ST → C → D/C → **Su**

ST → SV → ASP → EP → SP → AS → **Su**

ST → ASP → EP → SP → AS → **Su**

ST → ASP → SP → D/C → **Su**

ST → ASP → SP → HL/CO → **Su**

ST → ASP → SP → AS → **Su** (11)

ST → ASP → SP → D/C → AS → **Su**

ST → EP → AS → **Su**

ST → EP → SP → HL/CO → **Su**

C → D/C → **Su**

**Group C**      (32 Different Career Paths)

TA → ET → EP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
TA → ET → SV → EP → SP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → ST → SO → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → ST → C → SV → ASP → SP → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → ST → SP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → ST → SV → ASP → SP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → SV → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → SV → D/C → HL/CO → **Su**  
ET → C → EP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → SV → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → SV → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → AEP → EP → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ET → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ET → EP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → C → ASP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → C → SV → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → C → EP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → SV → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → AEP → SP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → AEP → ASP → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → ASP → EP → D/C → HL/CO → **Su**  
ST → ASP → SP → D/C → AS → **Su** (3)  
ST → ASP → SP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → SP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → SP → HL/CO → AS → **Su**  
ST → SV → ASP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → SV → AEP → EP → D/C → AS → **Su**  
ST → SV → ASP → SP → D/C → HL/CO → AS → **Su**

**Path Group D**

(2 Different Career Paths)

→ **Su**

ST → **Su**

**Total of 78 Different Career Paths**

**APPENDIX F**  
**INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO QUESTION 32**

***What are the perceived racial barriers facing African American seeking superintendency positions?***

- 003** The number of black superintendents in Mississippi is growing rapidly. Therefore there are no racial barriers from my perspective. If there is a barrier at all, it is a lack of preparation. If you wish to become a superintendent, you must be willing to pay your dues starting in the classroom and working your way through the system. It is also important to stay in one school district and not move around.
- 006** The notion that African Americans can only manage urban school districts successfully.
- 009** None
- 014** Predominantly Caucasian districts do not actively seek qualified minority candidates to fill vacancies, and minorities are not seriously considered. Limited mobility for African American candidates is a reality because we are still unofficially confined to urban/majority black populated districts.
- 022** Lack of respect for African American candidates with the same credentials as those of other ethnic background. Responsibility and accountability with limited or no real authority. Pursued for visions and ideas as a candidates but prevented from exercising said qualities when hired. Not given opportunity to select, but accountable for team failure. The African-American male will find it difficult to be placed in districts where the student population is not predominantly African-American.
- 028** The color of our skin, the lack of opportunities to gain experience. The feeling that we can't handle it. We are not often given the chance, because of attitudes held by others. This attitude is helped by many, many whites and too many Blacks.

- 029** Imbalance in boards of education: Mostly white males, Racism. A lack of diversity on boards of education.
- 030** Our options are limited to small rural African American school districts. We have to be male or very fair skinned. We are willing to work for less. We are not knowledgeable of optimal packages and how to get them.
- 033** Black superintendents are primarily hired only in predominately black school districts.
- 036** African American are generally shut out of the superintendency until district is heavily minority with declining test scores, funding, and community support.
- 043** Not enough people with open minds!
- 044** The limited number of African American accepted for superintendency positions is a clear indication of reservation on the part of controlling Boards of Education. Consequently, the perception would be that African Americans lacks experience at the various levels. A further perception is that African Americans must be overly prepared to perform as Superintendent.
- 056** African American aren't capable of being CEO's. White males make strong leaders. Most boards of education are made up of white males who select superintendents like themselves.
- 057** Communities appear to want educational leaders that look like them. Many feel that African American superintendents competence is suspect; yet most advanced degrees are awarded from predominantly Caucasian graduate schools. African American superintendents are small in number which affects the networking or any semblance of the "good ole boy" syndrome, thus thwarting opportunity for movement. They are basically considered for minority dominated districts.

- 059** It has been my experience that most barriers are “gender” related rather racial.
- 064** Large percentage of Boards still predominantly white male. Fewer African American entering the profession. Old networks do still exist. Professors in school administration (Educ.) still influence decisions. Lack of support from colleagues. Too few role models. Lack of desire to move (often have strong community ties church, family, etc.). Some salaries are not financially beneficial.
- 065** In my opinion some of the barriers facing African American seeking superintendency positions are: Lack of support base. No access to the Good old boy/Girl network. Majority school boards usually do not support African American superintendents.
- 066** Majority white Board are not hiring African Americans. Majority white communities are not interested in African Americans supt. regardless of academic prep. Perception African Americans are not equal with the tools address high achieving children. Search firms are not pushing African Americans.
- 069** Usually we are selected to serve districts with financial problems. Often we are expected to obtain miracles. We are often given little support or inadequate support to achieve objectives. Minorities often feel we can overcome years of inequities to serve their personal needs. We have to guard against having unrealistic expectations of ourselves. Being superhuman!!
- 071** The major barrier is that most predominately white districts do not consider hiring non-white superintendents.
- 073** Lack of support from people in position power and influence; perceptions that African Americans candidates are not experienced-ready to take on the superintendency in certain locations; biased attitudes by certain school boards; inability to handle politics and finances (budget).

- 075** Mobility/marriage issues; lack of mentors and advocates; opportunities to serve as an assistant superintendent or deputy superintendent (white males go easily from high school principalship, but women and African American must touch all bases to be considered seriously for superintendent positions); not readily considered in non-diverse districts; Boards of Education.
- 081** There are a lack of qualified interested candidates for central offices positions of the supt.'s position. In N.Y., I conducted supt. searches for districts in Saratoga...not one African American out approx. 350 candidates. If you go to Hampton University to recruit you will see education majors recruited off into other professions.
- 082** Unrealistic expectation on the part of African American community coupled with a lack of support on the part-when the "Tire meets the road."
- 083** I am not aware of any perceived racial barriers.
- 086** There are barriers facing African American superintendents in the realm of control of media tends to concentrate on publishing negative image news and creating images for the public or magnify ills of urban areas. Also in trying to create a legitimate network to...other superintendents, it is normally artificial and frequent interactions don't occur on a local level. Frequency of contact and supportive information is crucial in the initial steps of creating leadership strength and imagery.
- 088** The lack of a viable network of African Americans for recruiting and advocating for African American candidates to the superintendency appears to be a hurdle. Further, the rapid turnover in urban superintendencies, the numerous "buy out" has created a glut of African American superintendents who are less marketable for whatever reason. After their buyouts they-the superintendents-become history.
- 089** Lacks communication skills; not well ground in fiscal management; inability to make sound decisions under pressure; lacks vision; doesn't



keep board informed; not part of the Good old Boys' Network; lack of acceptance in predominantly white communities with diverse student populations; lack of experiences in central office and building level.

- 093** By the fact that you are African American the playing field is not level.
- 096** All of the barriers that I have faced have been racial or political.
- 099** N/A
- 103** Most Boards appear to be more concerned about how to satisfy the business community and those that do not have children in school. If supt. can satisfy the upper-class parent and power leader and can relate. That in their experience and interview they may have a chance, otherwise Board members regardless of color will be very hesitant to hire.
- 105** African American tend to be limited to school district with a majority African American. School boards are still made up primarily of white males. African American superintendents do not have as efficient a safety network to help them obtain a second superintendency after having their first as white superintendents do.
- 107** African American are still largely employed in districts with a high occurrence of proverb and limited financial resources these districts also are among those that perform the lowest on academic tests.
- 108** Search process; good old boy/girl network; lack of experiences; lack of degree (professional); lack of interest; lack of being selected, recruiting; lack of being kept on the job; stress from white parent(s) business, newspaper, T.V.; just plain old racism.
- 118** Urban versus suburban; majority white school boards; majority white community, majority white student population.

- 120** A reluctance by some boards and communities to consider elevating a minority to the top position. Also, a fear of doing something not previously done.
- 126** Difficult to be part of the good old boys' network.
- 132** Preparedness, opportunity. No matter what other considerations you throw into the equation it all comes back to one and two above.
- 137** Generally when African Americans assume the superintendency with a few exceptions the district has deteriorated to unacceptable conditions we are then expected to perform miracles and to restore excellence within a very short time. Demands and expectations are often unrealistic.
- 139** The number one problem which African Americans face is the perception that they will not be well perceived by a majority white population. This barrier prohibits many excellent and highly capable persons from securing good positions.
- 145** Accessibility to district classified as white is limited. You're apt to secure a "Black" District than non-Black. Black Districts are more likely to have poor achievement, financial problems, and a high indigency.
- 147** Networking, knowing where the jobs are, race, preparation advanced degrees.
- 150** I served as an elected superintendent, the first African American ever elected to the post. The voting population in our county is approx. 82% white.
- 151** As a African American superintendent I am constantly "second guessed" about decisions that have been well thought out. The media is much quicker to exploit any situation in our district and analyze happenings more closely.

- 152** Pervasive racism that says we will not be led by blacks no matter how competent. Southern whites fear blacks in leadership positions especially when they can't control the person. The control of education through politics is another factor. In the south, both black and whites are more concerned about jobs than they are about preparing our children.
- 153** Opportunity
- 156** Few opportunities to network with sitting superintendents. No direct link to information regarding vacancies. Few opportunities to join "good old boy" network.
- 168** That Blacks can't be or make good CEO's. That we can't handle people or money...
- 170** There is a perception that an African American can only be the superintendent of a district that is primary "minority.
- 174** Blacks (African Americans) are only effective in all African American or predominately African American systems. Lack of a true sense of educational philosophy. Poor budget skills. Will not plan thoroughly for long range planning, budgets, curriculum, facilities, etc. A non-minority population will respond positively to African American leadership, a fear of a backlash from the community. Prevailing fear that the quality of services will decline. Social prejudice, African Americans will not be a great spokesperson for a majority district. There is fear of poor speaking, writing, and general communication skills. Fear of not making tough decisions in crisis situation. Lack of vision for the district. Will not involve themselves with majority organizations and therefore the district will start to look African American. Note: Many of these issues fall into prevailing stereotypes of how the majority view African Americans. Keep in mind, when a board employs a superintendent they are employing a person to lead the district. An African American credential often times gets buried in the prevailing stereotypes situations.

- 175** Being prepared to deal with perceptions that others have of you. Prepared educationally with the knowledge to run a good school, look for new and better ways to improve student achievement.
- 176** Opportunities are very limited especially where the board majority is non-African American or student body is not majority African American. More often than not school boards tend to hire people who look like them.
- 178** Unfortunately boards are usually made up of whites! They tend to consider African American candidates either when racial problems exist or the district is minority. Getting the experience as assistant superintendent can also be hampered by the same factors.
- 179** Excet Exam. Continuously being under the microscope.
- 180** There are too few opportunities for African American educators to assume high level positions in educational organizations where they can develop the experiences required for effective performance in the superintendency. Boards perceive that African American candidates are only appropriate when the majority of students in the systems are African American.
- 181** None
- 191** One becomes a messiah or scapegoat.
- 196** African American superintendents seem to always become supt. in school dist. that are in financial and academic trouble.
- 199** The idea that African Americans can only run a school district after there is an economic and educational decline in the school setting. In my area black superintendents are hired only after the whites have drained everything out, supposedly. Then there is the general feeling of the community and staff that you will fail, so you are watched a lot closer than a white superintendent.

- 214** A lack of strong Board members who are willing to openly provide employment opportunities for African Americans.
- 217** Perceived lack of competence by white and African American board members.
- 220** The obvious ones come from Anglo Americans who do not yield control of million dollar budget school systems until the system is headed for financial disaster. The other obstacle thrown by African Americans who do not respect the opinions of the authority of black superintendents. The crab syndrome operates here in a vicious way. The black superintendent can NEVER relax completely because of the enemies who fight without race. The color of their skin may be black or white.
- 221** Opportunity to work in suburban areas; restricted to majority minority; racism.
- 222** Racism still plays a major factor in Board selection. They fear the reaction of the majority community to African American leadership. But if given a chance Afro-American superintendents prove to be excellent choices. Superintendent are good or bad depending on their leadership and management skills. Race is not a prohibiting factor. More Afro-American superintendents must dare to lead majority districts.
- 223** I'm not convinced that there are racial barriers opposing Black-Americans seeking superintendency positions.
- 230** You can only become a superintendent in a majority African American community. There are exceptions, but this is the general rule.
- 231** Preparation and experience.
- 234** Prepared and racial makeup of the school community to be served.

**235** Lack of internal networking and inside knowledge. Community readiness. Lack of support mechanisms. Very few opportunities in small communities...usually not as diverse.

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